
Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships and Brand Anthropomorphism:
The Case of Social Media Based Anti-Brand Communities

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Author's Biography

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Resumo

Objetivo – A presente investigação tem como objetivo compreender se a antropomorfização da marca aumenta as tendências dos consumidores para cultivar relações negativas com as mesmas, no contexto de comunidades anti-marca em redes sociais. Além disso, investiga quais os tipos de relações negativas dos consumidores com a marca predominantes nesse canal e quais as principais causas que levaram estas relações a passar de positivas a negativas.

Metodologia – Foram realizados dois estudos para responder às questões de investigação. Assim, o estudo 1 é uma análise netnográfica de seis comunidades anti-marca baseadas no Facebook, que considera as seguintes marcas: Apple, Nestlé, McDonalds e Uber. O estudo 2 trata-se de um questionário online aplicado às comunidades anti-marca que o consentiram. No total, foram recolhidas 99 respostas, todas consideradas válidas. Finalmente, os dados deste estudo foram analisados através do software SPSS 24 e da macro Process 3.1.

Resultados - O estudo netnográfico revela que os consumidores com tendência para atribuir características humanas às marcas, geralmente atribuem responsabilidade e intencionalidade às suas ações. Portanto, quando estas ações são negativas, a atribuição de culpa pelos consumidores a uma marca específica reflete-se frequentemente em ações anti-marca. Além disso, a análise de conteúdo revelou que experiências negativas em compras anteriores e incompatibilidade ideológica são as principais razões do ódio à marca. Finalmente, os resultados quantitativos validaram que a atribuição de culpa tem um impacto significativo no ódio à marca e que a incompatibilidade ideológica modera a relação entre a antropomorfização e o ódio à marca.

Contribuições da Pesquisa - Esta investigação estabelece a relevância da antropomorfização da marca na área do marketing. Também é reconhecida uma conexão entre antropomorfização da marca e relações negativas entre o consumidor e a marca no contexto de comunidades anti-marca em redes sociais.

Originalidade/Valor - A literatura sobre a antropomorfização da marca ainda é escassa, principalmente na área do marketing e comportamento do consumidor. Além disso, no âmbito das relações negativas entre consumidor e marca, a maioria dos estudos sobre comunidades anti-marca concentra-se principalmente em sites e não em redes sociais.

Palavras-Chave: Relações Negativas entre Consumidores e Marca | Ações Anti-Marca | Ódio à Marca | Comunidades Anti-Marca em Redes Sociais | Antropomorfização da Marca.

Abstract

Purpose – This research aims to understand whether brand anthropomorphism increases consumers' tendencies to cultivate negative relationships with brands, in the context of social media based anti-brand communities. Also, it verifies which types of negative consumer-brand relationships prevail in this channel and what causes caused their shift from positive to negative.

Methodology– In order to answer the proposed research questions, two studies were conducted. First, study 1 is a netnographic study of six anti-brand communities based on Facebook, which targets the following brands: Apple, Nestlé, McDonalds and Uber. The second study is an online survey applied in the anti-brand communities that consented it. 99 responses were collected, all considered valid. Finally, all the data from the survey was analysed using SPSS 24 software and Process 3.1 macro.

Findings – The netnographic study reveals that consumers with tendency to perceive brands in human-like terms usually attribute responsibility and intentionality to its actions. Therefore, when actions are negative, consumers' attribution of blame to a specific brand is often reflected through consumer activism. Moreover, content analysis revealed that negative previous purchase experiences and ideological incompatibility are the main reasons for Brand Hate. Furthermore, findings from the online survey validated that Blame Attributions have a significant impact in Brand Hate and that ideological incompatibility moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

Research Contributions – This investigation established the relevance of Brand Anthropomorphism in marketing research. It is also recognised a connection between Brand Anthropomorphism and Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships, alerting brands to the negative potential of this branding strategy.

Originality/value – Literature on brand anthropomorphism has yet to consider a potentially harmful relationship with consumer-brand relationships. Also, the majority of studies regarding anti-brand communities mostly focused on websites and not on social media.

Keywords: Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships | Anti-Brand Activism | Brand Hate | Social Media Based Anti-Brand Communities | Brand Anthropomorphism.

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1. Introduction

Brand Anthropomorphism has not been studied in the case of Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships. Nevertheless, former research in consumer behaviour approaches the existence of strong consumer-brand relationships (Aaker, Fournier, & Brasel, 2004; Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Belk, 2013). Such relationships are potentialized by anthropomorphism, which means that consumers often perceive brands in human-like terms (Fournier, 1998). Further, Brand Anthropomorphism emerged as a multidimensional concept in contemporary life in which consumers and products engage in complex relationships that mutually define the participants (Guido & Peluso, 2015; Lanier, Scott Rader, & Fowler, 2013). Moreover, investigators mostly focused on related issues such as antecedents and consequents of anthropomorphism (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007; Epley, Waytz, Akalis, & Cacioppo, 2008), positive effects of anthropomorphism in consumer-brands relationships (Delgado-Ballester, Palazón, & Pelaez-Muñoz, 2017; Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014) and on purchase behaviour (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). Considering this statement, anthropomorphism is frequently used as a branding strategy to achieve favourable consumers reactions towards brands (Puzakova, Hyokjin, & Rocereto, 2013).

Also, literature in marketing research has addressed anthropomorphism for products (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; S. Kim & McGill, 2011) but not for brands, which are more abstract constructs. Furthermore, this line of research draws that anthropomorphism could lead to both positive and negative product evaluations (Puzakova, Hyokjin, et al., 2013) and that effects of anthropomorphism depend on brand roles (Kim & Kramer, 2015). Moreover, research on Brand Anthropomorphism is still at its early stage and is insufficient (U. Tuškej & Podnar, 2017) and also did not focus on negative consumer-brand relationships.

Furthermore, psychological literature describes that anthropomorphism is a cognitive automatic process that reveals consumer's tendency to attribute humanlike characteristics to non-human agents (e.g. brands) and perceive them as having their own motivations, intentions and even capable of experiencing emotions (U. Tuškej & Podnar, 2017). Consequently, brands that can establish strong relationships may attract some consumers while repulsing others (Wolter, Brach, Cronin, & Bonn, 2016). Also, more investigators call for studies considering the risks of negative relationships for consumers and brands (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; U. Tuškej & Podnar, 2017).

Based on the previous statements, the current study addresses this gap in the literature by proposing that Brand Anthropomorphism is not just a method for positively influencing consumer's minds and can increase the potential for actively Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships. Also, MacInnis and Folkes (2017) suggest that more research is needed for better understanding why certain types of negative relationships prevail and what causes changes in relationships (from positive to negative).

Furthermore, consumers may feel incongruences with brands that not only lead to engage in behaviours of anti-consumption but also to publicly expose their disagreements (Wolter et al., 2016). In line with previous statements, online environments and more recently, social media, have proportioned the perfect tools for sharing and discussing brand related contents, and for the development of multiple anti-brand communities wishing to express negative experiences with specific brands - in other words, social media based anti-brand communities (Popp, Germelmann, & Jung, 2016). Therefore, this research contributes to the understanding of brand anthropomorphism and its influence on negative consumer-brand relationships in social media. To this end, the present study will examine if consumers tendencies to perceive brands in human-like terms have a positive impact on Negative Consumer Brand Relationships. More specifically, this investigation wishes to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: In the context of social media based anti-brand communities, does consumers' tendencies for Brand Anthropomorphism increase the potential for negative consumer-brand relationships?

RQ 2: Which are the types of Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships that prevail in social-media based anti-brand communities and what causes relationships to change from positive to negative?

Consequently, this research is important for both management and the academy, since it will provide better understanding on how consumers can relate to brands in human-like terms and its correlation with negative consumer-brand relationships.

In the following sections, this work elaborates on the conceptual framework introduced above. First by reviewing overall relevant literature on negative consumer-brand relationships, specifically passive negative consumer-brand relationships (e.g. brand avoidance, brand aversion) and active negative consumer-brand relationships (e.g. anti-consumption and anti-brand activism). Second, this study considers brand anthropomorphism in marketing, psychology and consumer research, dividing the concept on the three perspectives determined by MacInnis and Folkes (2017), respectively human-focused perspective, self-focused perspective and relationship-focused perspective. The last

perspective is the one to which this study wishes to contribute by assessing one more side of the relationship between anthropomorphism and Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships.

Furthermore, this study will be answering the research questions by the means of two studies. First study (qualitative method) will use the netnographic approach of Kozinets (2015) and second study (quantitative method) will apply an online survey to validate the specific results found in the first study. Finally, this investigation will provide key results for each empirical study, followed by a discussion of the main academic and managerial implications of the research and some contributes for future research.

2. Conceptual Background

The following chapter will access the most relevant previous literature considering negative consumer-brand relationships, with special focus on anti-consumption and anti-brand activism. Further, it will also be presented a literature review on brand anthropomorphism, with special emphasis on the relationship perspective.

2.1. Negative consumer-brand relationships: An overall review

Branding paradigm has changed and consumers no longer accept brands passively (Dalli, Romani, & Gistri, 2006). The concept of negative consumer-brand relationships is not new and negative relationships can arise from a formerly positive one (Fournier, 1998; Thomson, Whelan, & Johnson, 2012). Previous psychology literature explains that most people can describe experiences, emotions and outcomes as good or bad. Furthermore, negative events will play a stronger role in the human's life than positive events, because at a neurological processing level, brain responses for bad actions are stronger and last longer, resulting in superior recall for misbehaviours (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001).

Authors have investigated negative relationships in several domains, such as brand avoidance (Lee, Motion, & Conroy, 2009), brand aversion (Park, Eisingerich, & Park, 2013), anti-brand activism (Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello, & Bagozzi, 2015), anti-consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012; Cherrier, 2009; Dalli et al., 2006; Hogg, Banister, & Stephenson, 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009), brand dislike (Dalli et al., 2006), brand divorce (Sussan, Hall, & Meamber, 2012), and more recently, brand hate (Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; Hegner, Fetscherin, & Delzen, 2017; Zarantonello, Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2016).

The consumer culture perspective allows scepticism towards brands (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004), especially when including high switching costs, a local monopoly situation, risk aversion, social pressure, ignorance, inertia and market constraints or barriers (Alba & Lutz, 2013). Abuses of power (Dalli et al., 2006) and disregard of consumerism may give way to consumers' frustration (Alba & Lutz, 2013).

Interestingly, brands are one of the most valuable and influential communication tools for companies (Kucuk, 2010). Moreover, at this communication level, if people who are happy about their relationships express them with positive verbal and nonverbal behaviours, contrarily, those who are

unhappy will proceed the opposite way (Baumeister et al., 2001). Such behaviours are relevant to this study since bad relationships can have harmful effects on the brand and can influence other consumers.

Consequently, people are more likely to share negative experiences or complaint reviews in social media (Grégoire et al., 2009), giving consumers more power over companies (Dalli et al., 2006) and the opportunity to fight injustices (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016). In this sense, the evolution of the available tools for consumers in the online environment (e.g., Facebook), especially when contacting with brand profiles, has great impact in visibility and complaining (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Hoffmann & Lee, 2016).

Finally, attachment 1 provides the evolution of negative consumer-brand relationships considered in this study.

2.1.1. Brand Avoidance

Negative brand meanings generate aversion and consequently, avoidance or abandonment (Hogg et al., 2009). Thus, brand avoidance is commonly defined in the literature as the consumer's deliberate rejection of a specific brand (Knittel, Beurer, & Berndt, 2016; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Since brands are a dynamic construct and brand avoidance is a multilateral concept, there are many reasons why consumers chose to distance themselves from brands (Hegner et al., 2017). Therefore, the concept is only correctly applied when the products/services of a brand are available to the consumer and they still choose not to consume them (Hegner et al., 2017; Knittel et al., 2016). Also, when considering brands with large portfolios, avoidance can occur at a sub-brand level, by avoiding certain products and not the brand (Knittel et al., 2016).

Family, peers and social media are relevant to the formation of values and attitudes and can influence behaviours of avoidance. Consumers pursue brands that are congruent with their positive and desired self and that offer the possibility of self-extension (Huber, Vollhardt, Matthes, & Vogel, 2010) and create distance from brands associated with the negative undesired self (Hogg et al., 2009; Huber et al., 2010; Wolter et al., 2016).

Brand aversion is directly connected with attitudes, while avoidance and abandonment are related to behaviours (Hogg et al., 2009). Although the three concepts seem to have a direct and causal

relationship between them, they also have different strengths of feelings and behaviours, since brand avoidance may have more long-term effects (Hogg et al., 2009; Rindell, Strandvik, & Wilén, 2014).

Furthermore, online media offers a beneficial environment for revenge actions when service failure occurs and may be proceeded by avoidance, which is less costly for the consumer. The study of the evolution on revenge and avoidance over time allows the understanding that desire for revenge decreases over time while desire for avoidance increases (Grégoire et al., 2009).

Moreover, the literature suggests five types of avoidance, naming (1) experiential avoidance, (2) identity avoidance, (3) moral avoidance, (4) deficit value avoidance (Lee, Motion, et al., 2009) and (5) advertising avoidance (Knittel et al., 2016). Experiential Avoidance relates with disconfirmed expectations and negative experiences during consumption (Lee, Conroy, & Motion, 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Identity avoidance is associated with symbolic incongruence (Lee, Motion, et al., 2009), meaning the inability for the consumer to associate his identity with the brand's. Moral avoidance or ideological incompatibility goes beyond the concerns of the self, considering the wider society and the demand for social responsibility (Lee, Conroy, et al., 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009; Rindell et al., 2014). Moral avoidance is also based on country-of-origin and anti-hegemony behaviours. Deficit value avoidance considers brands that are deficient in value, with perceived negative cost and benefit trade-off and don't require experimentation. Lastly, advertising avoidance (Knittel et al., 2016) is related to the dislike of the content, chosen celebrity endorser, music and consumer's responses to advertising, meaning that the same communication can create several different perspectives and responses.

Although consumers avoid brands, there are barriers that make it difficult to carry on that intention, such as lack of alternatives, inertia and influence of others (Lee, Motion, et al., 2009).

2.1.2. Brand Aversion

Over the last years, brand attachment – the strength of the relationship between the consumer's self-identity and brands – has emerged as a two-way concept (Park et al., 2013). Relationships are strong and positive when the brand and the self-identity of the consumer are coincident and relationships are negative when there is incompatibility between the two identities, turning attachment into aversion (Park et al., 2013). Brand aversion happens when a brand is conflicting with the self's interests and beliefs, increasing the consumer-brand distance (Park et al., 2013).

Accordingly, the attachment-aversion model (Park et al., 2013) identifies two key variables, brand self-distance and brand-prominence. In fact, brand self-distance proposes that a close relationship is positive and a distant relationship is negative. Further, brand prominence is the extent to which an object possesses visible characteristics that ensure brand recognition. The Attachment-Aversion theory represents the first model for the negative side of consumer-brand relationships and although it was relevant for understanding brand aversion, it's incomplete when considering consumer's activist behaviours (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013).

2.1.3. Brand Hate

Brand Hate is often driven by consumer's negative experiences with brands, which leads them to complain (e.g. negative word-of-mouth) and engage in hostile activities to cause harm to the brand (Barger, Peltier, & Schultz, 2016), (e.g. anti-brand communities).

Therefore, the conceptual model of brand hate (Zarantonello et al., 2016) is divided in two groups, namely (1) active brand hate and the (2) passive brand hate. The active and direct components comprise anger and contempt/disgust and the passive components, which aggregates emotions related to fear, disappointment, shame and dehumanization – and imply more active behaviours.

Previous frameworks expose three possible antecedents for brand hate, such as (1) dissatisfaction related to a product or service based on negative past experiences, (2) associations and impressions of the brand and their users, and (3) corporate social performance that is against the values of the consumer (Bryson, Atwal, & Hultén, 2013). The last two aspects can also be presented as symbolic incongruity and ideological incompatibility, which have the strongest influence on brand hate (Hegner et al., 2017). Moreover, those aspects are all significant, majorly because negative experiences affect actual consumers and the remaining determinants can affect both consumers and non-consumers (Hegner et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, brands should verify the degree of loyalty and commitment of the consumer, since more severe cases should be first dealt with. Interestingly, when loyal consumers feel betrayed, they may easily become haters, turning into threats to brand equity (Hegner et al., 2017).

2.1.4. Anti-consumption

Anti-consumption is a growing field of research that asserts on consumers conscious reasons against consumption of specific brands (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012) and not the adoption of alternative brands

that seem more appealing. Initially, authors simply emphasized the conceptual opposites of previous considered reasons for consumption, which is limitative, but presently studies regard specific reasons against consumption (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012; Lim, 2017). Nevertheless, anti-consumption consequences are more difficult to access because the impacts of non-consumers on the brand are less directly observable (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012).

This contemporary society's rejection and challenging of consumerism has taken the form of anti-consumption movements (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Lim, 2017). Such organized movements seek to resist consumerist culture and express high levels of control over consumption (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Lee & Ahn, 2016). Similarly, voluntary simplicity emerges as an example of this phenomenon (Cherrier, 2009) by rejecting materialistic routines and pursuing sustainable consumption (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lim, 2017).

Accordingly, anti-consumption asserts on the notion that consumers reject brands that don't match their visions and identities (Hogg et al., 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Since many consumers use brands to help build their self-concepts and express themselves (Wolter et al., 2016), it's relevant to understand what consumers don't want and what motivates anti-consumption behaviour (Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Similarly, excessive consumption negatively affects consumers' well-being (Lee & Ahn, 2016), which may also lead to anti-consumption (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016). Indeed, anti-consumption is motivated by personal and global concerns (e.g. ethical, social and environmental) (Lim, 2017) and requires high levels of control and autonomous behaviour to avoid materialism (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016; Lee & Ahn, 2016).

The literature suggests a conceptualization of anti-consumption as multidimensional construct (attachment 2). Consequently, research on ethical consumption (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016; Rindell et al., 2014), consumer resistance (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012; Cherrier, 2009; Hogg et al., 2009), symbolic consumption (Hogg et al., 2009) and boycotting (Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009), also addresses practices leading to anti-consumption (Lim, 2017).

Therefore, boycott behaviour as a form of anti-consumption implies disapproval of a company's actions and demands action against consumption of a specific brand – either by political or ethical reasons (Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2011; Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009). Moreover, consumer resistance has also been addressed as anti-consumption, but not all acts of resistance are based on anti-consumption motives (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012). For example, in cases of open-source and

collaborative communities (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004), this resistance is expressed precisely by consuming those products/services, rather than not consuming at all (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012).

Then, more explanatory reasons for anti-consumption are bad product performance, resistance to power (Cherrier, 2009; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009; Romani et al., 2015) and towards global brands hegemony (Cherrier, 2009; Cromie & Ewing, 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009; Romani et al., 2015), social inequalities (Cherrier, 2009; Romani et al., 2015), emotional solitude (Cherrier, 2009), or simply the pursue of a simpler lifestyle by reducing material acquisitions (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016; Lee & Ahn, 2016).

Since anti-consumption can be emotionally and financially costly, refusing specific brands requires more effort from the consumer than consuming (Chatzidakis & Lee, 2012). Consequently, even though consumers express negative feelings towards some brands, they still use them sometimes for lack of alternatives (Dalli et al., 2006).

2.1.5. Anti-brand Communities

The anti-brand and anti-consumption movements are assumed by previous authors as related constructs in the sense that one can create and/or aggravate the other (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Even though anti-branding is a relatively recent theoretical development (Dessart, Morgan-Thomas, & Veloutsou, 2016), over the last twenty years, communities have increased either in quantity and relevance and exist through different cultures and types of communities (Zaglia, 2013).

Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) first started approaching the concept of brand communities in 2001, by defining them as “a specialized, non-geographically bound (...) based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand” (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Also, communities are more likely to form around a strong and somewhat historic brand. Since then, the concept has evolved quite fast from the positive side to the negative side – anti-branding.

Notwithstanding, anti-branding is the active rejection of brand behaviours (Dessart et al., 2016) and is usually seen in the form of communities with common visions of consumer injustice, wishing to contest corporate transgressions (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006, 2010; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). Activists usually perceive a brand's strategy driven by internal benefits (e.g. profits) rather than external interests, such as benefits for consumers (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010). In summary, members of

those communities pursue economic, political and cultural changes in relation to a specific brand (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010).

Anti-brand actions can take place both online and offline and usually target global brands, trying to impact their brand equity and reputation (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Kucuk, 2008; Romani et al., 2015), especially because they represent long term commitments to reject specific brands (Dessart et al., 2016), becoming market activists (Dessart et al., 2016; Iyer & Muncy, 2009). Individuals in anti-brand communities have a sense of belonging and identification both with the community and the other members. In this sense, social approval is a decisive factor for influencing belonging in the community (Dessart et al., 2016). In fact, communities must provide an environment where consumers may create their own meanings and practices while developing their individual identities (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010). Consequently, a clear self-image of members and their collective brand meaning will give way to a collective identity, decisive to strengthen the group (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010). All of the above factors are key to promote participation and loyalty to the community and, consequently, increase engagement (Dessart et al., 2016).

Therefore, authors identified three social markers that are present in brand communities, respectively (1) consciousness of kind, (2) shared rituals and traditions and (3) moral responsibility (Brogi, 2014; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).

The first community marker – consciousness of kind – is related to identity theory and is what will drive members to feel connected to one group instead of other. The second community marker, shared rituals and traditions is related to the histories and experiences that members share with each other, closing even more the circle of relationships and connecting values and behaviours. Lastly, moral responsibility represents the third community marker and relates with members integrating new users into the community, for example (Brogi, 2014; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Zaglia, 2013).

Companies should understand that consumer-brand relationships don't end when consumers stop buying and that those relationships may continue in the form of offends (Johnson et al., 2011). Usually, consumers negative feelings towards these brands aggravate when ethical and moral consumers concerns are involved, creating the need to harm or even eliminate the brand (Romani et al., 2015). Furthermore, the dissolution or failing of self-relevant relationships can have a significant negative impact on a person's self-definition and emotional well-being (e.g. shame, embarrassment, insecurity) and may predict anti-brand actions (Johnson et al., 2011).

Finally, attachment 3 provides an overview and evolution of “anti-branding” research in marketing field.

2.1.5.1. Social Media Based Anti-Brand Communities

Social media is increasingly becoming popular as a mean for consumers to communicate negative experiences and impressions about brands (Balaji, Khong, & Chong, 2016). Besides social forms of anti-branding still being scares in the literature (Dessart et al., 2016), with most previous work focusing on traditional websites (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009), their influence on contemporary social movements is starting to be noted (Kozinets, 2015).

In fact, consumers are moving from in person complaint (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018) or even online review websites and blogs to social media (de Campos Ribeiro, Butori, & Le Nagard, 2018). Conversations about brands take place every day in online media and a great percentage of those comments are negative (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018).

Therefore, social media is a low-cost amplifier of information to a large audience (Brogi, 2014; Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Kucuk, 2008). In fact, online messages are easy to diffuse and their audience is expanding considerably (de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018; Zaglia, 2013). Social media allow users to interact, share stories, pictures and videos and so on. For example, the possibility to “share”, “like” and even react on Facebook represent the social nature of online relationships (Brogi, 2014). Even though in the case of online communities, members interaction is mostly computer mediated rather than face-to-face, authors still believe they share social identity and consciousness of kind (Palazón & Sicilia, 2008).

Also, the public nature of these platforms allows internet users not only to express themselves but also to read negative feedbacks from other consumers, which may affect their opinion about products and services they may be considering (Balaji et al., 2016; de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Popp et al., 2016). Also, negative word-of-mouth has greater credibility in this environment, and is also considered to be more trustworthy than brand generated content (Kucuk, 2008).

The spreading of negative WOM is an attempt from the consumer to limit their prejudice over some negative outcome – usually considered unfairness or injustice – (Balaji et al., 2016) and also to publicly account responsibility for brands actions (de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018). These communities often

promote ideal scenarios and utopian thinking that would translate into economic, social and cultural changes concerning those brands (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010).

Furthermore, the study of negative messages on the internet is gaining importance because brands are becoming more aware of the risks (Kucuk, 2014; Melancon & Dalakas, 2018). Acts of revenge might even be approved when the company apologizes and when the prejudice for the company is bigger than the prejudice for the consumer. Such fact is also related to the responsibility that individuals attribute to brands and to the empathy that other consumers have for each other, making the revenge more acceptable (de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018).

In accordance, online consumers seek speech equality (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009; Kucuk, 2008, 2014) and are described in the literature as more participative, resistant and active (Dessart et al., 2016; Kucuk, 2008). Therefore, consumer empowerment is a consequence for consumer generated anti-branding (Kucuk, 2010) and can be classified into four groups: (1) experts, who pursue first ranking brands and usually have better market knowledge; (2) symbolic haters, who's goal are last ranking brands and often believe in word-of-mouth and rumours; (3) complainers, who target brands that range between the top and the middle of rankings and frequently focus in service or product failure; and finally (4) opportunists, who pursue brands inconsistently positioned at the bottom of rankings and believe scandals on media and social news.

Overall, marketing communications are now a two-way street that left many brands unsure of how to deal with negative consumer comments, making this a primary subject in this area (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018).

2.2. Anthropomorphism and Brand Anthropomorphism

Theory of animism was one of the first concepts to be related to anthropomorphism, in the sense that one could transfer human qualities to the brand object (Fournier, 1998). Nevertheless, anthropomorphism does not simply involve animism (Epley et al., 2008; Waytz, Cacioppo, & Epley, 2010), since animated brand characters do not overcome the personification area that is needed to build a consumer-brand relationship (Puzakova, Kwak, & Rocereto, 2009).

Even though studies regarding brand personality were valuable for advancing in this area (e.g. (Aaker et al., 2004), especially because they evolved the concept from simply describing the brand with

human features to accrediting brands with human action, capable of powerful interactions with consumers (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016), they represent only one of the several components of brand anthropomorphism (Puzakova et al., 2009). Accordingly, anthropomorphism goes beyond the observable inferences and considers unobservable characteristics, such as nonhuman agent's intentions and motivations (Epley et al., 2007; Epley et al., 2008; Puzakova, Hyokjin, et al., 2013).

The concept has been studied in social psychology as an automatic psychological process (Epley et al., 2007). When a non-human agent is being anthropomorphized, individuals use the same processes involved when thinking about other human beings, because human knowledge is more readily accessible and embedded in people thinking than non-human knowledge (Epley et al., 2007).

Some humans anthropomorphize nonhuman objects more than others; some situations are more willing to cause anthropomorphic beliefs than others; some cultures are more open to anthropomorphism than others (Epley et al., 2008), and some brands are more willing to be humanized than others (e.g. utilitarian products are less likely to be anthropomorphized than more emotional products (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012; Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). Considering this, humanization cannot be completely understood without recognizing individual differences among consumers (P. Hart & Royne, 2017).

2.2.1. Driving Individual Tendencies to Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism cannot be fully understood without considering its antecedents, respectively (1) social motivation, (2) effectance motivation and (3) accessibility to human knowledge, that reflect human's motivations to anthropomorphize a nonhuman agent (Epley et al., 2007). This three-factor theory reveals that the willingness for humans to anthropomorphize objects relies on individual characteristics and that this process is influenced by the accessibility of human knowledge, by the presence of situational cues and by personal motivations on a specific time (Epley et al., 2007).

First, social motivations reflect a desire of social connection (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007, 2012; Epley et al., 2008) and a need of belonging that may occur, for example, in the form of anti-brand communities (Puzakova et al., 2009). This need for social interaction with humanized entities does not necessarily translate into commercial transactions (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). In fact, anthropomorphism by itself is not expected to directly impact consumers purchase intentions, rather, exposition to anthropomorphism may influence attitudes and evaluations that may convey in such behaviour (P. Hart & Royne, 2017).

Thus, the hypothesis for humanizing brands are higher when consumers are lonely (Bartz, Tchalova, & Fenerci, 2016; Epley et al., 2008; Feng, 2016; P. Hart & Royne, 2017), have low self-esteem (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017) and have experienced social pain (Puzakova et al., 2009) or exclusion (Chen, Wan, & Levy, 2017; Epley et al., 2008). Even though highly anthropomorphic products are likely to satisfy the need of belonging for lonely people (Feng, 2016), humans' needs for association can be attenuated when people have the chance to connect first with other people before brands (Bartz et al., 2016; Chen et al., 2017).

Second, compensating social connections through nonhuman agents also increases control over the environment (Epley et al., 2007; Lanier et al., 2013), to reduce uncertainty – effectance motivation (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007, 2012; Epley et al., 2007; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Puzakova et al., 2009). Power is a main variable considering this topic (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; Kim & Kramer, 2015). When objects are anthropomorphized, individuals reflect about them according to their social norms and expectations, which implies that anthropomorphism effects will not be the same for everyone (Kim & Kramer, 2015). On one hand, consumers who perceive themselves as having high power are less likely to feel that the brand may exert control over them (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017), perceiving less risk in the relationship (Kim & Kramer, 2015; Wan, Chen, & Jin, 2017). On the other hand, anthropomorphism increases risk perceptions for people with low power (Kim & Kramer, 2015). Therefore, anthropomorphism should increase when effectance motivation is high, and decrease when effectance motivation is low (Epley et al., 2007; Epley et al., 2008).

Lastly, elicited agent knowledge refers to the accessibility to human knowledge. In other words, the more a non-human agent resembles a human agent (e.g. appearance, shape, voice, etc), the more likely it is to be humanized. Further, this process occurs automatically but sometimes these tendencies result in cognitive correction. This deliberate correction concerns consumers realisation of anthropomorphism (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017) and usually increases with age (Epley et al., 2007).

Next, we review on the three perspectives that divide anthropomorphism literature (attachment 4).

2.2.2. Anthropomorphism from a Human-Focused Perspective

Anthropomorphism from a human focused perspective refers to the perceptions of a non-human object as having human-like qualities, such as human-like physiognomy features, a human-like mind and a human-like personality (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

Most former studies changed the appearance of the object for methodologic purposes (e.g. (S. Kim & McGill, 2011), which is limitative (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). Even if consumers anthropomorphize more products that resemble human-like features and traits (e.g. names, gender, physical characteristics), they are not enough to understand humanized brands (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007; P. Hart & Royne, 2017; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Wan et al., 2017).

Furthermore, there are two types of humanization studied in the context of advertising, respectively subtle and overt. Subtle humanization happens when a non-human agent has indirect and subtle human characteristics and resemblances, such as attributing emotions to a spokes-character (e.g. when the user enters a wrong password on the iPhone and the phone shakes). Furthermore, overt humanization is when a non-human agent has direct human characteristics in their appearance and marketing communication (e.g. spokes-characters talking and acting like humans) (Reavey, Puzakova, Larsen Andras, & Kwak, 2018).

Such differentiation is more relevant considering marketing communications, since different degrees of humanization may result in different attitudes from the consumers (Reavey et al., 2018).

2.2.3. Anthropomorphism from a Self-Focused Perspective

Moreover, from a self-focused perspective, brand anthropomorphism also includes perceived congruity between the brand and the self and brand-self connections (Guido & Peluso, 2015; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Puzakova et al., 2009). When consumers anthropomorphize a brand, a schema for the type of person is suggested and, therefore, people evaluate considering how well brands features fit in that schema (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007). If congruity is low, consumers are less probable to anthropomorphize, in opposition, if congruity is high, people are more likely to anthropomorphize (Kim & Kramer, 2015).

Additionally, cross-cultural differences will impact consumers tendencies to anthropomorphize brands because it provides different standards and ideologies about people's relationships (Epley et al., 2007). Consumers naturally anthropomorphize complex products more than simple products (Hart, Jones, & Royne, 2013), especially in modern cultures (Epley et al., 2008). On that regard, if the object is complex, consumers should feel superior motivation to be effective while interacting with the product, anthropomorphizing it more, and vice-versa (Hart et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, simply anthropomorphizing a brand does not grant positive behavioural effects, since they depend on the assigned role of that specific brand in the consumers mind (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012). In fact, believing a non-human agent as having a humanlike mind may consequence in (1) perceiving them as worthy of moral concern, (2) capable of intentional action, translating in responsibility for them and (3) as a source of normative social influence for the consumer (Waytz et al., 2010).

2.2.4. Anthropomorphism from a Relationship-Focused Perspective

Anthropomorphism also considers how consumer-brand relationships can resemble human relationships, within its many types (Fournier, 1998; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). In fact, previous research stated that anthropomorphized brands are more likely for relationship building (Puzakova et al., 2009) and that humans are both capable of loving and hating their objects (P. M. Hart & Jones, 2011).

When brands are anthropomorphized, consumer and brands interactions may assemble interpersonal interactions and this ability also targets them for moral judgments, resulting in positive or negative evaluations (Alvarez & Fournier, 2016; Delgado-Ballester et al., 2017; Kucuk, 2016). Therefore, relationships between consumers and products are bilateral and mutually defining (Lanier et al., 2013) and are more complex and dynamic than first authors assumed (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012).

More recent authors consider incongruence between expectations and reality of performances. Such outcomes may reason for frustration of the individuals since the nonhuman agent was incapable of fulfilling the proposed end (Lanier et al., 2013). Moreover, transgressions in the case of brand anthropomorphism has impact on the attitudes of the consumer since it attributes responsibility for negative performances (Kwak, Puzakova, & Rocereto, 2015; MacInnis & Folkes, 2017; Puzakova, Rocereto, & Kwak, 2013). Price increases from a humanized brand is an example for these transgressions (Kwak et al., 2015), especially because consumers are paying more for the same outcome (Epley et al., 2008; Kwak et al., 2015). Also, anthropomorphism alone does not always lead to changes in consumer preferences for humanized brands (Kwak, Puzakova, & Rocereto, 2017). In fact, if consumers perceive the brand actions as intentional, then it will affect their attitudes towards the specific brand (Puzakova, Rocereto, et al., 2013).

3. Methodology

Considering the previous literature review, this next chapter focuses on the empirical research. First, it will be addressed the object of study, the two methods for this investigation and findings for each study. Finally, this research will provide the reader with the discussion, major contributes and limitations of the study and considerations for future research.

3.1. Research context

The empirical research intends to explain the relationship between anthropomorphized brands and social-media based anti-brand communities. Therefore, it is relevant to validate if anthropomorphized brands exacerbate negative consumer brand relationship, leading consumers to express their disagreements through anti-brand communities. Therefore, this investigation has two research questions that will guide the empirical study, concretely:

RQ 1: In the context of social media based anti-brand communities, does consumers' tendencies for Brand Anthropomorphism increase the potential for negative consumer-brand relationships?

RQ 2: Which are the types of Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships that prevail in social-media based anti-brand communities and what causes relationships to change from positive to negative?

To address the previous research questions, two studies with different methods will be conducted. The first study is a netnography - qualitative research methodology - that has been presented in previous literature as an adequate method to study online consumer communities (Popp et al., 2016; Zaglia, 2013). Further, this analytical method explores consumers' online debates and analyses specific emotions and behaviour patterns of relationships between social actors in a network (Chen & Hollebeek, 2014; Kozinets, 2015). In order to achieve a more holistic view of the anti-brand communities, this research will also be conducting interviews to the administrators of the selected communities. With this effort, it is expected to validate findings of the content analysis but also to get a second perspective – the administrator's – about anti-brand communities' major motivations and characteristics. Next, the second study is an online survey – quantitative research methodology - designated for the members of the selected anti-brand communities.

Besides, previous research expresses the importance to recognize the benefits of combined methods of investigations, such as qualitative and quantitative approach (Belk, 2013). On one side, qualitative research usually involves smaller numbers of consumers because analysis in greater detail but is also

more subjective and requires more human interaction. On the other side, quantitative data – even though is a more superficial analysis - will allow the investigation to give voice to all the members of the anti-brand community (Belk, 2013).

3.2. Object of study

Since multinational brands and strong brands are usually more susceptible to be criticized and attacked, they are also more vulnerable to anti-brand movements (Dessart et al., 2016; Kucuk, 2014), specially because of their economic worth and the values they represent (Kucuk, 2008, 2014).

Furthermore, this investigation pursued the following criteria to select the anti-brand communities for the analysis. First, this investigation will select anti-brand communities with product and service brands, since it is possible to exist differences in consumer responses when exposed to a more tangible or intangible brand. Also, previous studies on brand anthropomorphism mostly considered product brands and finding from content analysis may provide new understanding on the matter.

Second, either the product brands and the service brands will be high on anthropomorphic appeals. This is especially important since this investigation doesn't want to replicate previous analysis that changed the appearance of the objects with the purpose to make them look more human.

Third, the anti-brand communities will have to be above 1.000 users and at least have two years of existence, to ensure the liability of the community and relevance of the study. Since Facebook is still the most popular social network in the world (Statista, 2018: Attachment 5), this research will target communities based on this platform. Also, Facebook's functionalities allow high interaction from consumers (Melancon, 2018) which is also relevant for this type of analysis.

Fourth, this study tried to find both closed and open communities – but always public – to analyse differences among their structures. Nevertheless, considering the chosen brands, it was only found one closed community. Even though it could not proportionate a full understanding of the differences for all the brands, due to the richness of content of that community, it was decided to maintain it.

Fifth, contents must be related with negative consumer-brand relationships. Existing pages with names of anti-brand communities but with no relevant content will be disregarded. Finally, anti-brand communities' publications must date to 2018, otherwise they will not be considered active pages.

Consequently, the search for the anti-brand communities started based on the ranking for Best Global Brands 2017 of the Interbrand. Thus, three brands that fitted the previous criteria were found, and the fourth brand added proves to be somewhat controversial in the past years. In that sense, this study will be analysing two product brands, namely Apple and Nestle - and two service brands – Uber and McDonald's.

3.2.1. The Product Brands: Apple and Nestlé

Apple (1st place in Interbrand Top for Best Brands 2017) is a strong and controversial brand and constituted our first choice to begin the exploration for the anti-brand groups and pages. Consequently, the first step was to search for anti-brand communities on Facebook using the following keywords: “Hate Apple”, “Apple Sucks”, “Apple sux”, “Apple blows”, “Fuck Apple”, “Boycott Apple”, “Apple is shit” and “Anti Apple”. In total, eight active communities appeared in the original search, which illustrates these negative manifestations from consumers to Apple's negative behaviours (Chen & Hollebeek, 2014).

Nevertheless, three pages obtained the better results by fitting all the set requirements. First community is a public group, in which the investigator had to ask for permission to enter, and second and third communities are open pages. It was decided to study three pages about Apple because all of them fitted the requirements and had different types of contents and interactions. Also, it was the only brand found by this study to have both closed and open communities, from which it's expected to gain understanding about their major differences in consumer participation and interaction preference. Finally, during the two-year period of analysis, 2378 posts were observed in the *I Hate Apple* community, followed by 107 publications in the *Apple Sucks* and finally 66 posts in the *Anti Apple (Brand)*.

The second product brand - Nestlé - is in 59th place in the Interbrand Top for Best Brands 2017. Again, the search was based on the following keywords: “Hate Nestlé”, “Nestlé Sucks”, “Nestlé sux”, “Nestlé blows”, “Fuck Nestlé”, “Boycott Nestlé”, “Nestlé is shit” and “Anti Nestlé”. In the moment of the search, only one page was active, had helpful content and the minimum followers required, namely *Boycott Nestlé*. During the analysis timeline, this study considered 226 publications of this anti-brand community.

3.2.2. The Service Brands: McDonalds and Uber

Negative brand messages on the internet propagate at high speed, which can be very harmful, especially for service brands, since it is impossible to control every level of the operation (de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018). For that reason and because previous literature mostly focused on product brands for studying anthropomorphism, this investigation also considered service brands.

The first service brand – McDonalds – stands in the 12th place in the Interbrand Top for Best Brands 2017. Again, the search for the anti-brand pages was made with the following keywords: “Hate McDonalds”, “McDonalds Sucks”, “McDonalds sux”, “McDonalds blows”, “Fuck McDonalds”, “Boycott McDonalds”, “McDonalds is shit” and “Anti McDonalds”. Consequently, the most accurate result for the set requirements was found in *I hate McDonalds*. During the two-year period, 339 postings were considered for the analysis.

Finally, the Uber service brand represents one of the most controversial brands at the moment. Even though it is not possible to find it in the Interbrand top as the other brands, the chosen anti-brand community – *Uber Sucks* - checks all the criteria. To find pages regarding this brand, the same keywords were used for the search on Facebook, namely: “Hate Uber”, “Uber Sucks”, “Uber sux”, “Uber blows”, “Fuck Uber”, “Boycott Uber”, “Uber is shit” and “Anti Uber”. Concluding, between May 2016 and May 2018, the investigator analysed 348 publications from this anti-brand community.

Table 1. Overview of the anti-brands communities studied.

Anti-Brand Community	About	Mission	Publications (May 2016-May 2018)
I Hate Apple (Since 2007) 4530 members Public Group (by adhesion)	“We hate iPods, iPads, iPhones, iMacs, iLife, iTunes and everything else Apple make. We also love technology - So we find apple's repeated pushing to be the market leader with their overpriced, slave-produced, substandard crap highly offensive”.	n/a	2378 publications
(continues)			

Apple Sucks (Since 2010) 9176 followers Public Page	"We hate Apple, the big company that does nothing more than create myths".	"Showing the world Apple sucks!"	107 publications
Anti Apple (Brand) (Since 2012) 3524 followers Public Page	"Products from Apple are rubbish. Anti Apple! to protect our EARTH and save your MONEY".	"Anti Apple, to protect EARTH & ENVIRONMENT and save your MONEY! BTW If you don't like any products from apple or just hate the brand (actually it can't even be a brand) which named Apple, thus welcome!"	66 publications
Boycott Nestlé (Since 2012) 4329 followers Public Page	"LIKE this page if you are against Nestle's practices of WHO CODE violation concerning the marketing of breast milk substitutes (baby formula) in North America, Europe, and developing countries around the world. LIKE this page if you hate Nestlé!"	"Educate everyone about how Nestle harms people, especially the most vulnerable babies!"	226 publications
Uber Sucks (Since 2014) 2399 followers Public Page	"We're in a political campaign. The candidates are legitimate transportation companies and their drivers and the opponent is an asshole named Uber."	n/a	348 publications
I Hate McDonalds (Since 2009) 5811 followers Public Page	"The biggest collection of anti McDonald's pictures and links on the internet! Thank you all for helping to build this page, please share!"	n/a	339 publications

Source: Own elaboration. Data collected on July 2018.

After considering the description of the social media based anti-brand communities, this investigation will proceed with the two empirical studies, which are dependent and sequential.

3.3. Study 1 – Qualitative Analysis - Netnography

Due to the objective and nature of this study, this research decided to employ a symbolic netnography (attachment 6), to understand anti-brand communities' behaviours, meanings and values (Kozinets, 2015). Moreover, netnographies provide a more naturalistic and non-intrusive view (Kozinets, 2002), allowing the investigator to access to spontaneous consumer messages and interactions. In fact, this method allows the netnographer to begin the investigation almost as an outsider and complete the analysis as an integrating part of the community, capable of communicating the major motivations and characteristics of it (Kozinets, 2015).

Therefore, three types of data regarding the analysis of content will be presented, respectively (1) comments directly quoted from the users, without any alterations, (2) notes and observations of the netnographer convenient from the examination of the publications and interactions between users, and (3) co-created data, resultant from the interviews (Kozinets, 2002, 2015). Consequently, this investigation includes semi-structured interviews with the administrators of the studied communities. This type of interviews follows the two specific research question defined for this investigation while allowing each interview to follow its course. Further, this method is also more suitable for mixed methods research designs such as this investigation, since it is useful to fill in gaps (Arsel, 2017). Furthermore, interviews help to gain perspective on experiences that the interviewee lived, as well as consumers behaviours and language characteristics (Belk, 2013). This method allows interactivity and flexibility but also demands attention from the researcher to get the most value from that specific contact that is usually limited in time (Arsel, 2017).

To this end, this investigation established contact with the six anti-brand groups through Facebook private message but only three answered the request, respectively the three anti-Apple communities. A week after the first contact attempt, the investigator reached a second time, but again without any feedback. Considering this limitation, it was decided to still include data from the three interviews, since the outputs that were already given by the administrators were useful for the understanding of the motivations and characteristics of the members and anti-brand community in general.

Moreover, all the interviews were conducted through the Messenger application. Even though the channel for the interview was not ideal, it allowed a spontaneous and open conversation about the anti-brand communities. During the interviews, all the interviewees were aware of the main goals of the conversation and gave consent for the citation of their names and responses.

Additionally, some of the interviews followed a more structured line, since the answers were more aligned with pre-expectations, while others had to be more tailored at the moment, given some surprising feedbacks. Consequently, after the first conversation, some new questions had to be added to the script. Also, as recommended by Ellis (2016), it was given a certain freedom of direction to the interviewee by using more open questions, to allow the administrators to explain their experiences and perceptions on the matters exposed.

3.3.1. Data collection and Analysis

During data collection for content analysis, the investigator kept a passive participation to ensure that members of the anti-brand communities were not influenced in their activity and ultimately, to avoid any bias in the results. In total, this study considered two years of publications – from May 2016 to May 2018 - in the context of six anti-brand communities, which translated into 3486 publications in total. The selected anti-brand communities predominantly use text and images to express their meanings, since videos and infographics were not commonly found. Further, all of the data was saved in Microsoft Word, so that it could be accessible and analysed at any time. Most of the publications are in English and comments in other languages were translated using Google Translate. Messages which had no value for this investigation were also disregarded. Finally, to quote the more relevant postings and comments from users, this research uses the initials of their first and last names and the date of publication, in order to protect their identities. Collected data was analysed and compared in between groups in order to try to find similarities and major differences among them. Next, it will be presented a detailed netnographic analysis of the anti-brand communities, followed by general results from this first study.

Brand Anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism has been the focus of many researches in the field of social psychology and consumer behaviour but it's relatively new in the marketing field. Consequently, this investigation considered the main characteristics presented by Waytz et al. (2010) to analyse tendencies for anthropomorphism. Further, within selected anti-brand communities for this study, Apple revealed to have the highest traces of humanization. First, the brand imbues their products with human features, such as the virtual assistant Siri for the iPhone, for example, that is capable of understanding what users say and talk back (Wang, 2017). To illustrate, Junious Hawkins (16 August 2018), *Apple Sucks* administrator explained in interview:

“(...) The usage of that type of Artificial Intelligence is about as "real" as a brand can get. Whether it's Google Assistant, Alexa or Siri... They're not necessarily the "face" of their respective organizations, but these "AI" tools are used to track buying habits, learn voice/typing/search algorithms and to study human behaviour. They do in fact help the brand to transcend/metamorphose into a living and breathing product.”

Moreover, on *I hate McDonalds*, members created alternative versions of the mascot Ronald McDonald, where it is presented as a monster in many of the imagens published in the anti-brand community. Even though mascots refer to theory of animism, it's believed that in this community, Ronald has symbolic meaning and provides a vehicle for members to translate some situations characterized by the absence of McDonald's ethics and social responsibility. Besides, previous research accessed that anthropomorphism is frequently used as a marketing communication strategy (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007) and that marketing professionals enable brand anthropomorphism by creating characters, mascots and spokespeople (Puzakova, Rocereto, et al., 2013). For example, it's possible to see Ronald McDonald in situations such as stealing children's money (image 1), which reflects users concern about child labour and fraud in donations for McDonalds charity institutions, and motivating child obesity (image 2) and over-consumption (image 3). To illustrate:



Image 1

Source: I Hate McDonald's
(Facebook page)
25 February 2017

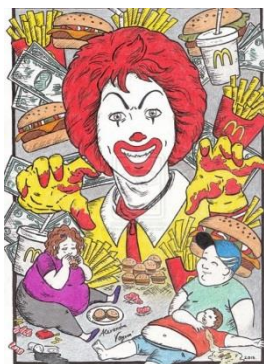


Image 2

Source: I Hate McDonald's
(Facebook page)
5 October 2016

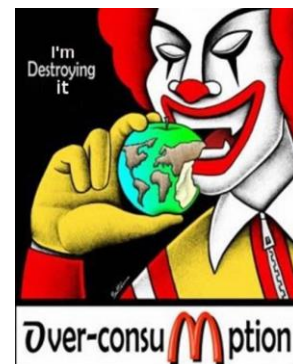


Image 3

Source: I Hate McDonald's
(Facebook page)
12 October 2016

Next, regarding *Boycott Nestlé*, some members refer to the brand in the first person and some conversations are even in direct speech. As it will be further explored, since concerns about this brand are related with ideological incompatibility, members seem to have even stronger feelings of disagreement and hate towards the brand. To illustrate:

“Nazis! Water is a HUMAN RIGHT!!!!!!” (MS, 27 May 2016)

Furthermore, previous findings also reflect consumers tendency to attribute intentionality and responsibility to brands actions. Hence, these are direct consequences of brand anthropomorphism and it indicates that consumers understand brands as having human-like minds (Waytz et al., 2010), which is a deeper level than findings of anthropomorphism regarding product features and its appearance. This phenomenon was found across all of the studied anti-brand communities, specially when consumers were faced with situations of negative purchasing experiences (such as product/service failure) and in the absence of corporate social responsibility. First, to illustrate perceived intentionality in brands actions:

I Hate Apple: “More consistent updates? Until Apple cripple the device with said updates intentionally slowing it down and forcing people to upgrade to the next iPhone” (SJ, 1 October 2016).

Apple Sucks: “iPhones are just too restrictive, and foppish. Style over substance and fashion over function, it's trendy. Why? I don't know? Especially when they intentionally make the iPhone increasingly more and more less flexible and adaptive. Then there's the made in China by slave labour issue no one talks much about” (JP, 11 September 2016).

Anti Apple (Brand): “The main problem is not the "Slowing of the phone" because that is still defensible. The problem from this shitty company is, they withhold that information, misleading people, opening a chance that their customers buy a new iPhone, enriching those shiteheads, while causing "economic damage" to those customers ... wait, they are not customers. They are cult followers ...” (AA, 23 December 2017).

Boycott Nestlé: “Boycott Nestle Meal replacements made from rice, soy, or other plant foods are far healthier than the dairy-based meal replacements that Nestle profits from, and regardless, Nestle intentionally targets families in developing/poor countries in their marketing of breast milk substitutes” (BN, 28 September 2016)

Additionally, consumers perceive non-human agents as capable of intentional actions because brands act according to reasons that are under their control and not the consumer's (Waytz et al., 2010). Furthermore, if a non-human agent is capable of intentional actions, then it should be held responsible for its consequences. To illustrate perceived responsibility regarding brand's actions:

I Hate Apple: “This will be brushed under the carpet as usual and the products will continue as they are. Or Apple will blame the user for having a phone in their pocket in the first place... or holding it with their hand and not a couple of fingers” (CD, 14 November 2016)

Boycott Nestlé: “Nearly 12% of baby deaths can be prevented through breast-feeding! And Nestlé must be blamed and take responsibility for a good many of those preventable deaths!” (RJ, 7 December 2016)

Uber Sucks: “You know honestly that is manslaughter. That's Uber's responsibility. And they're not going to take any responsibility they're just going to put the brakes on this for a few months even if that and send these cars back out. They should be charged with manslaughter. Even if somebody is jaywalking if it's somebody who sees that they're obviously going to stop if a computerized vehicle is not going to stop there's a problem there not even taking manslaughter in consideration just in general there's a problem” (JO, 20 March 2018)

Accordingly, previous research specified that attributing responsibility to a human brand could negatively affect consumers' evaluations towards it (Puzakova, Hyokjin, et al., 2013). Hence, the previous examples both validate consumer's perception of brands for intentional and responsible actions but also illustrate its negative impact on their relationship. Subsequently, this investigation validates connections between anthropomorphized brand and negative consumer-brand relationships. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the major reasons exposed by anti-brand members for developing negative relationships with brands and the most commonly found types.

Negative consumer-brand relationships. Consumer dissatisfaction with the brands' practices and ethics – thus leading to ideological incompatibility - and negative purchasing experiences regarding product/service failure are considered in all of the analysed anti-brand communities.

Moreover, the first motive (ideological incompatibility) usually gave space to longer publications with consumer's arguments validating this investigation's pre-assumption about negative consumer-brand relationships, specially Brand Hate. In fact, previous research considers that brands with socially irresponsible conducts, particularly when incompatible with consumer's ideological principles, are susceptible targets for hate. Further, this phenomena occurs because the brand failed as a relationship partner (Lee, Motion, et al., 2009). Further, during the interview with the administrator of “Apple Sucks”, Junious Hawkins explained:

“Apple believes in an Apple only ecosystem overall and I have a problem with that. For example, if Apple became so successful and you were only able to buy Apple products and only utilize their Ecosystem, that would eliminate a free market. A truly free market is important because it prevents process gouging and other anti-consumer practices. You could even compare Apple's main goal to what Amazon is accomplishing. The way Amazon is going, there will be no more retail competition! They believe in a one size fits all-Amazon only economy and that's bad for business. I believe Apple is attempting to accomplish the same goal and it's not ideal, in my opinion.” (9 August 2018)

Moreover, netnographic analysis provided the understanding that consumers react worst to the brands’ absence of ethical behaviour than to negative purchasing experiences. In this sense, literature validates that the proliferation of the internet and social media urges as a mean for expression needed changes in politics, markets and society (Kozinets, 2015). Also, the fact that consumers belong in a group that allows the interaction with other consumers that may have experienced similar situations, creates a sense of moral consciousness in an effort to improve social life (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006). This tendency is aligned with this investigation purpose of studying anti-brand communities on Facebook.

Thus, anti-Apple activists talk mostly about planned obsolescence, immoral manufacturing practices and high profits with low product and service quality for buyers. Following statements exemplify some of these motives:

Table 2. Anti-Apple activists’ major reasons for joining the anti-brand communities.

Negative Previous Purchasing Experiences	Ideological Incompatibility
<p><i>Apple Sucks:</i> “According to their prophet, Steve Jobs, it is sleek and great materials, hip, revolutionary, etc. In reality though, just like you said, it is shit.” (AA, 18 December 2016)</p> <p><i>Anti Apple (Brand):</i> “It always performed worse compared to stock android. There were many tests before that showed numbers of apps crashes, Apple was a winner in them. What's more, if some app is available for both ios and android it's the</p>	<p><i>Anti Apple (Brand):</i> “Should be criminal when you consider that this amount could feed the world. There should be a law in place limiting the amount of money they can hoard unless it is being used for developing new products. Those wireless headphones and waterproofing the iPhone are this years developments and certainly not new tech or expensive to develop. Microsoft does amazing things for charity. Apple lets a few employees donate 20k here and there, and has a lame red</p>

same or in many cases more advanced for android. Never the other way” (MD, 25 March 2017)

I Hate Apple: “I hate it because I owned one. If I am going to pay that much money for a machine it better work perfectly, mine had too many issues for a machine that costs 70% more than a similar PC.” (RB, 23 February 2018)

I Hate Apple: “Ugh, gonna be interesting to see how much worse they can make a product” (SC, 27 March 2018)

I Hate Apple: “It’s amazing how many failed products they have produced. They could have a “winner” if they had done Apple TV correctly. But they decided to lock it down so much that it was pretty much unusable” (KF, 12 April 2018)

I Hate Apple: “More evidence Apple overcharges and exploits its customers, tax laws, and its (among other things). It’s sad people keep paying 5-10 times more for Apple’s crappy, outdated products than they’re worth.” (ED, 12 May 2018)

option on their smallest selling iPod products.” (MM, 6 October 2016)

I Hate Apple: “If you buy apple you back the violation of human rights, suicide , child labour, horrible work ethics (MR, 4 May 2017)

I Hate Apple: “It isn’t the brand that I reject - it is their practices. Locked down software and hardware. Immoral manufacturing methods. Poorly specified and overpriced hardware for laptop/desktop machines. Ghastly marketing (when was the last time you saw somebody who wasn’t as skinny as a rake in an Apple ad?). A corporation sitting on a massive pile of cash for no discernible reason, whilst not giving anything significant back to the communities who purchase their products. Issuing updates to devices which effectively kill them by making them unusably slow and obsolete, thus creating wastage. These practices represent the brand to me and I find them distasteful, thus choose not to buy or support their products” (AF, 23 June 2017)

Source: own elaboration

Furthermore, in *Boycott Nestlé*, activists mainly reflect on matters considering the brands’ absence of social responsibility, as for the case of bottled water and milk for babies. To exemplify:

“Killing babies with infant formula is why I started this page!” (BN, 28 September 2016)

“Nestle’s evils know no bounds - profiting from water in a poor country such as Pakistan is beyond criminal.” (BN, 23 November 2016)

“Think about how many babies are malnourished because of their unlawful practices. Think about all those who will have their water supply compromised because of them” (LB, 7 April 2018)

Next, in the case of service brands, *I hate McDonalds* activists believe that marketing communications portrait products that do not correspond with the ones served in real restaurants and talk about the lack of quality and nutrients of the ingredients used and its possible consequences for health. To illustrate:

“The food is just rubbish but hugely marketed to impress people and there's very little nutritional value in any of it”! (AS, 14 October 2016)

“That is disgusting. What also is very disgusting is the way they treat our planet, our animals and their employees. It's a disgusting billion dollar company. But it's not going to shut it's doors very soon because from their early ages we take our kids to this horrible place and now they're addicted” (MR, 4 August 2018)

Finally, in the *Uber Sucks* anti-brand community, it is possible to verify members' eager for anti-consumption, either regarding Uber passengers and Uber drivers. To illustrate:

“Um no I will NEVER use an uber EVER #BoycottUber” (KM, 25 September 2016)

“Screw UBER stop driving for these ripoffs.” (PI, 1 March 2017)

“Stop complaining! Just stop using Uber!” (LG, 28 March 2017)

Besides, previous literature supports this connection between anti-branding and anti-consumption (Iyer & Muncy, 2009; Lee et al., 2009). Moreover, in the scope of negative consumer-brand relationships, anti-consumption and brand hate were the most relevant and commonly found concepts. Further, since there are many evidence considering consumers hate for brands in all anti-brand communities, it was decided to resume these findings in table 3.

Table 3. Users' comments for validating Brand Hate in the studied anti-brand communities.

Anti-brand community	Brand Hate
I Hate Apple	<p>“You have to wonder why he stayed so long. Presumably because he was seduced by the "cool" and the bling - the main reasons why I hate Apple!” (JH, 15 June 2016)</p> <p>“Only reason I hate apple is that it is <"apple">” (AS, 9 July 2016)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(continues)</p> <p>“The one major reason I hate Apple! Because they are destroying the complexity and ability of Technology to dumb it down into fashion accessories. This article dares to be honest that Apple is not a tech company but a Fashion company. I don't agree with a lot that is being said because at the end its regurgitates Apples supremeness and that it can never go wrong.” (SK, 16 September 2016)</p>

	<p>“God I hate Apple. Fuckers.” (DS, 25 October 2016)</p> <p>“This is why I hate Apple. It is evil to lie to people and this company thrives on deception.” (DD, 28 July 2017)</p> <p>“Just a note on why I hate Apple and their hypocrisy” (PM, 19 September 2017)</p>
Apple Sucks	<p>“All they do is put everything in metal cases that's all god I hate apple and I bought it years ago.” (MA, 7 June 2016)</p>
Anti Apple (Brand)	<p>“I really hate apple. How can anyone settle for their be? apple is the tyrant of technology?” (RK, 6 June 2017)</p> <p>“I hate apple for different reasons, mainly that they deliberately force people to upgrade their devices, that's what we should piss on them about.” (KH, 21 September 2017)</p>
Boycott Nestlé	<p>“That whole company deserves to burn in Hell” (CJ, 09 June 2016)</p> <p>“Fuck Nestlé!!! Shameful” (AK, 9 June 2016)</p>
I hate McDonalds	<p>“I hate mcdonald's.” (MS, 29 June 2016)</p> <p>“I've hated mcdonald's since I was about 10 years old. my loathing is deep...” (BD, 14 October 2016)</p> <p>“I hate mcdonalds.” (JL, 14 October 2016)</p> <p>“I hate McDonalds!” (KW, 13 September 2017)</p> <p>“Why don't they take real pictures of their food. I f@*\$in HATE HATE HATE this devil of a place. Ahhhhhhh!!!! Never again. Never again. Not with my money anyway.” (JR, 17 November 2017)</p>
Uber Sucks	<p>“I hate Uber.” (SV, 25 February 2017)</p> <p>“Why everyone hates Uber. It's not just the recent scandals. Uber's repeated misleadings have angered people the world over, and they're all here on one handy map” (US, 17 April 2017)</p> <p>“And Uber will now say they are only an app, they did nothing wrong. I hate Uber.” (SV, 15 August 2017)</p> <p>“RC, see we were not the only ones that hate uber.” (DK, 28 March 2018)</p>

Source: own elaboration.

Interaction Preference and Consumer Participation. Overall, this study observed that the closed group (*I Hate Apple*) works better than the open communities in terms of interaction, since it provides an understanding of exclusivity and augmented proximity between members. Previous research theorises that consumer participation is influenced by the degree of identification and satisfaction and their perceived influence within the community (Woisetschläger, Hartleb, & Blut, 2008). Furthermore, *I Hate Apple* allows members to publish directly, not having to first suggest any content to the administrator. In fact, the more the community is open to user-generated content, the more their

members will contribute and interact (Woisetschläger et al., 2008). Further, the role of the administrator also intends to regulate activity and grant a continuous and open conversation among users without a rigorous sense of hierarchy. During the interview with one of the seven *I Hate Apple* administrators, Dave Sidious explained:

“I feel that one of my roles as an admin in the community though, is to address bad logic in people's arguments. Even if we both dislike the same things. So, if someone is in the group screaming about how they hate apple, but they give really bad reasons for disliking them, me and the other mods will adjust their understanding of the subject” (4 August 2018)

Additional, even though *Anti Apple (Brand)* and *Apple Sucks* do not allow users to publish directly on their pages, they usually share content that is suggested by its members. Also, users may comment on publications freely and this typology of page also allows a higher reach than the public group. More particularly, for *Anti Apple (Brand)*, the anti-brand community allowed that a few members that were considerably more dynamic and participative were made administrators. For *Apple Sucks*, there is one administrator dealing with major page activity. Finally, for *Boycott Nestlé*, *Uber Sucks* and *I hate McDonalds* - it was not possible to deepen the role of the administrator, since there were no responses to the contacts made from the investigator. Even so, interaction among members in the *Uber Sucks* anti-brand community is considerably scarcer comparably to the other anti-brand communities.

Furthermore, members of the *I Hate Apple* anti-brand community tend to both react to the posts as well as comment on them. Additionally, attitudes among users on the “I Hate Apple” group seem to be more hateful and strong than on the other anti-brand communities. On the contrary, in *Apple Sucks* and *Anti Apple (Brand)*, users comment less and react more. Also, in *Boycott Nestlé* and *Uber Sucks*, administrators share more news than any other content. Finally, on *I Hate McDonalds*, members prefer to share more images than text. Images are aggressive, attacking McDonalds food quality and their ethical practices – either related to child labour or to their marketing campaigns targeting children.

Moreover, stories about in person negative experiences and imbalances of power are the two types of information that members seem to react and preference the most in all analysed anti-brand communities. These groups seem to have a strong purpose to share information and resources that contribute to fight abuses of power and improve the life of the other members (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006). This tendency also explains effectance motivation, one of the drivers for anthropomorphism that refers to human's need to gain control over the environment and reduce

uncertainty (Epley et al., 2007). In addition, members also desire connection with other consumers that may have experienced similar situations in the past and with the same social ideologies as them. This study believes that need for belonging in a group highly influences consumer's motivation for joining anti-brand communities. To illustrate:

Apple Sucks: "I started this community because I knew there were other people out there who felt the same way I did about apple. I actively have people wanting to join the cause and even help me run my page. I also have thousands of followers who love to see us pick apart Apple." (Junious Hawkins in interview, 7 August 2018)

Boycott Nestle: "I know you do. I think nestle designs its website to be convoluted so that one can't find all of its products in one place. I really appreciate the efforts you're making to get the word out there...I've lost count of the times that I've referred people to you. Keep up the good work!" (JP, 29 September 2016)

Relatively to Facebook as a mean for anti-brand communities, this investigation was able to conclude that open pages seek mass awareness while groups prefer a more private audience. To validate, Dave Sidious, "I Hate Apple" administrator, stated in interview: "I would prefer if Facebook wasn't the way we did it. But it's really the only option" (4 August 2018).

Nevertheless, social media based anti-brand communities allow members to interact immediately with other empathic consumers that often experienced similar situations as them (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006).

3.3.2. Results

Findings from netnographic approach provided evidence for validating the connection between the chosen brands and anthropomorphism. Furthermore, the anthropomorphized brand with the strongest evidence was Apple. Also, the content analysis of the anti-brand communities *Boycott Nestlé*, *Uber Sucks* and *I hate McDonalds* provided less indication that brands are anthropomorphized – which means that people are less predisposed to imbue nonhuman agents with human agency. This impact could be related to the simple fact that they provided with less content and interaction when compared with the anti-Apple communities. Nevertheless, it was possible to found examples of brand anthropomorphism across all of the studied social media based anti-brand communities.

Moreover, this investigation also found members' tendencies to attribute intentionality and responsibility to brands actions in all anti-brand communities. Consequently, since these variables are defined in literature as consequences of anthropomorphizing a non-human agent, these consumers tendencies also validate the presence of anthropomorphism in the anti-brand communities. Also, the first study validates the connection between brand anthropomorphism and negative consumer-brand relationships. Thus, the most common relationships found was brand hate, though anti-consumption and consumer boycott was also present in some of the anti-brand communities, but mainly in *Boycott Nestlé* and *Uber Sucks*.

Based on the previous conclusions, this investigation was able to answer the research questions. Moreover, content analysis provided other data that was considered useful for adding extra value to the investigation by considering characteristics of the communities that are consequences of the topology of the social media (i.e. Facebook). In this sense, considering literature on brand communities (Woisetschläger et al., 2008) this investigation also found that interaction preference and consumer participation are two key influencing factors for consumers' that join anti-brand communities. Therefore, considerably higher levels of interaction were observed in the *I Hate Apple* community (public group), when compared with the other five communities. In this public group, members tend to react and even comment on the same publication more than once, establishing long dialogues, sometimes with hundreds of comments. In the open pages, there is only a few comments and users react less madly about the subjects.

The analysis of the messages indicates that anti-branders use humour and exaggeration as a vehicle for their messages. As expected, postings within this communities reflected negative feelings towards the brands and previous negative experiences. Also, findings from this study are congruent with the results of de Campos Ribeiro et al. (2018) that express that when the consequences of the revenge for the company are less damaging than the ones for the consumer, the stronger will be the approval of the revenge by other members of the community.

Furthermore, interaction among this group's members reveal that there is consciousness of kind, shared rituals and traditions and moral responsibility (Brogi, 2014; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Nevertheless, consciousness of kind was most commonly found in *I Hate Apple* and sense of moral responsibility in *Boycott Nestlé*. The established connections with other members provide debates and clarification of ideas, always framing and reframing brands meanings (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2010).

In addition, Facebook is considered an appropriate media of communication for diffusing brand hate through anti-brand communities. On one side, the public group community seems to have more internal objectives because the members are leaned towards educating each other and sharing experiences about brands they consider to be better options. On the other side, open communities seem to have more intentions for consumer awareness and damaging brand's image.

Finally, it is also relevant to reflect on major differences among anti-brand communities for products and services before moving on to the quantitative approach. Therefore, this investigation concluded that it seems to be easier to identify anthropomorphism tendencies in anti-brand communities considering product brands, when compared to service brands. Also, statements regarding this matter appear to be stronger, more specific and also more abundant. Furthermore, this research was able to trace interactions that validated negative consumer-brand relationships both for product and service brands.

3.4. Study 2 – Quantitative Research: Online Survey

As previously mentioned, study 2 (quantitative analysis) is dependent on study 1 (qualitative analysis) and was only proceeded after the first was concluded. Moreover, this investigation had to change the object of study because it did not have a response from the following anti-brand communities: *I hate McDonalds*, *Uber Sucks* and *Boycott Nestlé*. Considering this limitation, the online survey (attachment 7) was employed in *I Hate Apple*, *Anti Apple (Brand)* and *Apple Sucks* and was shared by the anti-brand communities' administrators who invited members to voluntarily collaborate. Exceptionally, on *I Hate Apple*, the administrator advised the investigator to publish the survey directly on the group with the administrator's permission.

Furthermore, it was decided to proceed with the online survey on the available anti-brand communities because it increases chances to confirm dependencies between the variables being studied. Likewise, surveys are meant to produce statistics about a target population, by the means of the responses given by a sample of participants (Fowler, 2008). Also, authors explain that research methods should not only be used isolated, since combined methodologies could complement and validate each other (Bowling, 2009). Hence, this research used the software Google Forms to build the online survey.

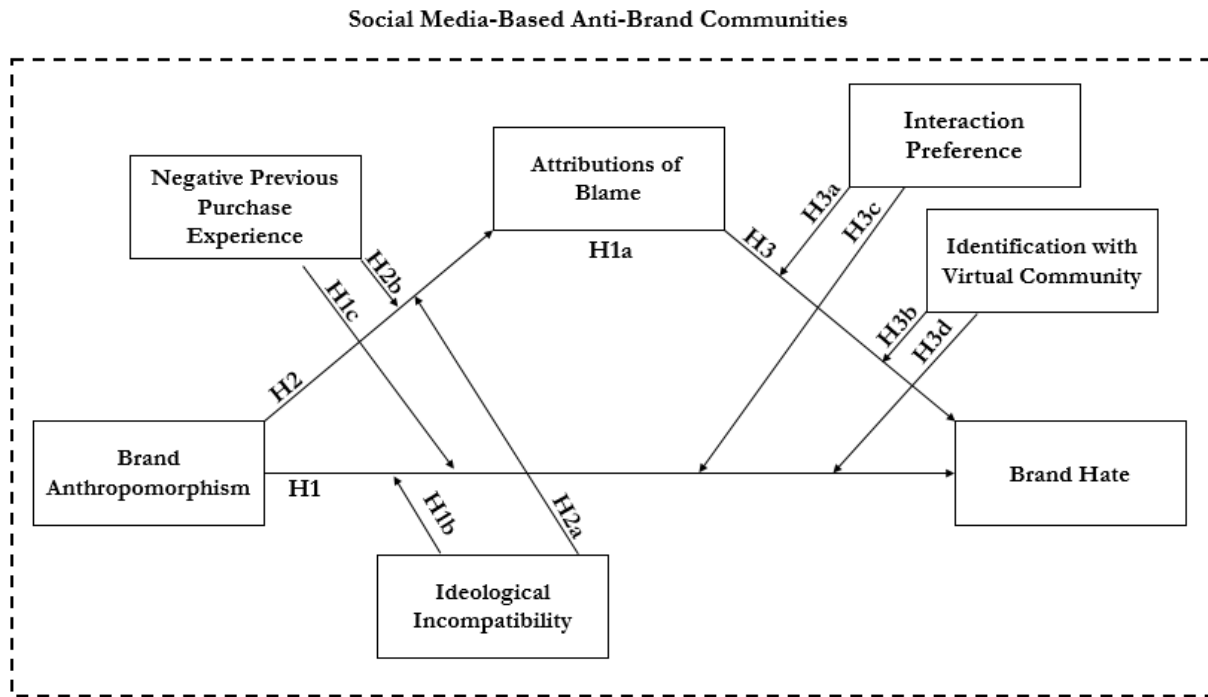
3.4.1. Research Model and Hypothesis

Based on the preceding netnographic analysis and literature review, this investigation developed the research model that will support and guide the quantitative study (Figure 1) and the hypothesis.

Further, hypothesis 1 refers to the direct relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate. Previous authors validated that attributing human characteristics to brand may lead to negative outcomes (Puzakova, Hyokjin, et al., 2013). Moreover, results from quantitative analysis found that Brand Hate is the most consistent and present negative consumer-brand relationship in the studied anti-brand communities. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H1. Brand Anthropomorphism positively impacts on Brand Hate.

Figure 1. Research Model for this investigation.



Additionally, previous authors defined that Anthropomorphism increases tendencies for humans to perceive non-human agents as capable of intentional actions and, therefore, responsible for its outcomes (Epley et al., 2008). In this sense, it is relevant to understand if consumers who anthropomorphize brands have tendencies to attribute blame on the brand and if that blame may mediate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H1a. Blame Attributions positively mediate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

Furthermore, this investigation wishes to validate that in the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate, Ideological Incompatibility and Negative Previous Purchase Experience will positively moderate the relationship. In addition, it is relevant to explain that the scale for Ideological Incompatibility comprises items that are congruent with results from qualitative analysis. More specifically, consumers in the analysed anti-brand communities refer to the absence of corporate social responsibility and to the non-identification with the brands' policies. Furthermore, the second moderator (Negative Previous Purchase Experience) will quantify the regret felt by

members of the anti-brand communities for having bought a specific product/service because of its failure and low quality. Both moderators were found in qualitative analysis to be the major reasons for complaining about the brand, for joining the anti-brand community and for the development of consumers' feelings of hate towards the brand. Therefore, it is hypothesized:

H1b. Ideological Incompatibility positively moderate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

H1c. Negative Previous Purchase Experience positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

Furthermore, since literature exposes consumers' attribution of responsibility and intentionality to non-human agents as a consequence for anthropomorphism (Epley et al., 2008), it is hypothesized that Brand Anthropomorphism is a predictor for Blame Attribution:

H2. Brand Anthropomorphism positively impacts on the moderator Blame Attributions.

Additionally, as Ideological Incompatibility and Negative Previous Purchase Experience may be an antecedent for Brand Hate, those constructs also may moderate the mediation with Blame Attribution for consumers with tendencies to anthropomorphize the specific brand, respectively leading to H2a and H2b.

H2a. Ideological Incompatibility positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and the mediator Blame Attributions.

H2b. Negative Previous Purchase Experience positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Blame Attributions.

Finally, hypothesis 3 focuses on the negative relationship found in the analysed anti-brand communities during the first study. Correspondingly, it was possible to verify that attributing responsibility and intentionality – measured with the scale for Blame Attributions - exponentiated negative feelings of hate from consumers towards the targeted brands. Therefore:

H3. Blame Attributions positively impacts on Brand Hate.

Also, it was considered the work of Woisetschläger et al. (2008) that validates the influence of the constructs Interaction Preference (members' willingness for joining and interaction in virtual communities) and Consumer Participation (members' satisfaction and identification with communities) in the study of digital communities. In this specific research, it is desired to verify if

Interaction Preference (H3a) and Identification with the Virtual Community could have a moderating effect on Brand Hate in the context of social media anti-brand communities. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H3a. Interaction Preference positively moderates the relationship between Blame Attributions and Brand Hate.

H3b. Identification with the Virtual Community positively moderates the relationship between Blame Attributions and Brand Hate.

H3c. Interaction Preference positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

H3d. Identification with the Virtual Community positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.

3.4.2. Pilot Test

In order to ensure that questions from the online survey are understandable, it was tested in person with three Portuguese marketing students to observe immediate reactions and to monitor time for responses. Then, given these first outputs, some questions with misinterpretations were altered and every reflection was considered. Finally, the survey was sent to other 11 Portuguese students (different from the first test) that completed it online, in order to verify the applicability of the chosen measures.

3.4.3. Measures and Sample

All of the used concepts and measures applied on the online survey are grounded on existing literature as previous research suggests. This aspect is important since developed and tested scales usually provide results with higher consistency and can, if needed, be adapted to fit the objective of a new specific investigation. Consequently, all of the scale's items were measured using five-point Likert scale, with anchors from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. This study opted to not attribute names to middle points in the scale to avoid neutral opinion stands from 3=Don't Agree or Disagree.

Furthermore, parametric tests are usually more strong than non-parametric tests and previous literature exposes that parametric tests normally work even on samples that does not follow assumptions for normality. Additionally, when analyzing Likert scales responses, specialists

recommend that investigators calculate total scores or a mean for the scale items specially when analyzing more abstract constructs, such as the ones in this investigation (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

Moreover, this section also includes a Factor Analysis for all scales, considering inter-item reliability of the chosen scales with Cronbach's Alpha test based on the levels defined by Murphy & Davidsholder (1998) (attachment 8) and seen in (Maroco & Garcia-Marques, 2006). Additionally, it was used the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test for sampling adequacy – minimum acceptable value above ,50 (Marôco, 2018) - and the Total Variance Explained – with a minimum value of 50% of total variance (Marôco, 2018). EFA was conducted for all measures because this study's sample is considerably different from the samples of the studies where the measures were originally used and also because previous investigators recommend to do it when Likert scales are used (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). Further, this study will briefly explain the chosen measures for the online survey.

Brand Hate: In order to consider Brand Hate for the anti-brand communities, this study adopted the proposed definition and scale of Zarantonello et al. (2016). The five-item scale presented a moderated to high inter-item reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=,87). However, the test demonstrated that if the item "I feel hostile to this brand" was excluded, the Cronbach's Alpha would rise to ,931. Consequently, after removing the item, EFA showed sample adequacy with KMO value of ,806 (good) and regarding total variance explained, only one of the three items from the scale account for 88,918% of the total variance. Finally, attachment 9 provides all the coefficients for Factor Analysis.

Negative Previous Purchasing Experience: To measure the negative purchasing experiences verified in qualitative analysis, this study used an existing scale by Mano and Oliver (1993) that originally analyses positive previous purchase experience. Further, since this study wishes to evaluate negative experiences, it was decided to reverse the positive items, since the sample's tendency for responses in these items was tendentiously negative. Furthermore, with Cronbach's Alpha test it was decided to eliminate the item "I feel bad about my decision to buy this brand" of the initial seven-item scale, which allowed an adequate level of inter-item reliability of ,737. Next, Exploratory Factor Analysis revealed sample adequacy with KMO value of ,652 (acceptable). Attachment 10 shows all coefficients for Factor Analysis.

Ideological incompatibility: To measure incompatibilities between consumer's and brands ideologies, this investigation employed the scale provided by Hegner et al. (2017). This study believes that the composed items are directly useful for understanding if members of the anti-brand

communities perceive the brand's actions as irresponsible, unethical and immoral. Further, it was added a fifth item from the study of (Garcia-De los Salmones, Herrero-Crespo, & Rodríguez-del-Bosque, 2005), as it was seen in Rodrigues, Anisimova, Brandão, and Rodrigues (2018). It was also considered that this last item was relevant for this study because analyses brand's intentions of achieving economic performance over corporate social responsibility – which is one of the results found during netnographic analysis. The result was a five-item scale with an acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=,783). Moreover, KMO test provided a good value of ,796 for sampling adequacy and regarding total variance explained, one factor accounts for 59,709% of total variance (minimum 50%). See attachment 11 for all the coefficients regarding Factor Analysis.

Brand Anthropomorphism: To understand individual's tendencies to anthropomorphize brands, this study used the IDAQ model presented by (Waytz et al., 2010) in the context of research in psychology. Since items in their scale were long and participants in the pilot testing reported it as a possible reason for survey abandonment, it was decided to simplify the scale to only five items that are consistent with the aspects that this research wishes to validate. More recent studies (Tuškej & Podnar, 2018) already used the simplified version of this scale and commented on its good reliability. Then, the resulting five-item scale also provided acceptable reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=,740). Furthermore, KMO test provided a good value of ,758 for sample adequacy. Finally, SPSS extracted 1 component that accounts for 49,298% of total variance. See attachment 12 for other coefficients for Factor Analysis.

Blame Attribution: The scale to measure Blame Attributions was originally used by Griffin (1996) to understand determinants of consumer attributions of blame for negative consumption outcomes. More recently, de Campos Ribeiro et al. (2018) employed the scale to understand the determinants off approval of online revenge. Further, this study believes that this measure would be a reliable consequent of Brand Anthropomorphism and a predictor of Brand Hate. So that the scale could be applicated to this study, some changes were made to assure positive interpretation from participants. Therefore, a Cronbach's analysis was conducted and it was found that the alpha level was ,535, which indicates that the scale did not have an adequate level of inter-item reliability. According to the analysis scores, simply by deleting one item, the highest possible value would be ,592, which would still not be satisfactory. Therefore, since this scale was relevant for the study, the investigator tried to delete the two less relevant items, specifically "I blame myself for the situation that made me join the community" and "I account myself responsible for the situation that made me join the community"

because they may have caused misinterpretations in reading. Finally, by eliminating the items, the alpha score was raised to ,799, which is acceptable. Regarding Factor Analysis (attachment 13), 83,337% of total variance could be explained with one factor and KMO test for sample adequacy was acceptable.

Identification with Virtual Community. The scale to measure consumer's identification with virtual community by Von Loewenfeld (2006) was originally used to understand motives for participation in virtual brand communities and was found in the paper of (Woisetschläger et al., 2008). Therefore, it was useful for this investigation, since participation preference is hypothesized as one the influencing factors for consumers to join anti-brand communities. Overall, the resulting five-item scale provided good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=,829). Further, KMO's value is good (=,802) which indicates good sample adequacy, and SPSS found that one component explains 63,358% of total variance (see attachment 14).

Interaction Preference. The scale to measure online interaction propensity (Wiertz & de ruyter, 2007) has been used in the study of brand communities (Woisetschläger et al., 2008). These authors defined that the type of membership that an individual has in a certain group is influenced by its disposition to engage in online interactions. Further, internet has a different nature from traditional communication and most of the interactions are made with strangers and with a much larger audience. Therefore, this measure is determinant to understand if interaction preference affects members' tendencies to join social media based anti-brand communities. The four-item scale provided a high reliability (Cronbach's Alpha=0,944). Attachment 15 provides all the tests for Factor Analysis.

Further, the survey was online for 12 days – 21 August to 1 September 2018 - and obtained 99 participations in total. More specifically 37 members belong to *Apple Sucks*, 36 to *I Hate Apple*, 11 to *Anti Apple (Brand)*, 7 respondents belong to all of the previous anti-brand communities and finally, 7 members belong to both *I Hate Apple* and *Apple Sucks* (Attachment 16). It's important to acknowledge that some members are actively participating in multiple anti-Apple communities. Further, the survey was anonymous and was composed by 13 closed questions and an open question regarding the country.

Before moving to descriptive statistics, this study will briefly characterize this study participants. Therefore, considering demographic variables, most members of the considered anti-brands communities are male with ages between 25 – 34. Further, most frequent nationalities are from UK

and USA, and regarding education, the majority of respondents (72,9%) has higher education. To conclude, attachment 17 resumes all of the outputs considering demographics.

Next, this investigation will regard descriptive statistics for some of the direct questions used in the online survey. Considering previous authors' statements about negative consumer-brand relationships, it is described that negative relationships often originate from previously positive ones (Grégoire et al., 2009). Consequently, when asked if they ever loved the Apple brand, 32% answered "yes, in the past", 1% answered "yes, currently" and 66,7% responded "No" (attachment 18). Thus, most of the respondents never loved the brand before, but there is still a significant number of respondents that assume to have loved the brand in the past. Further, it is important to reflect on previous authors that studied negative consumer-brand relationships who report that positive relationships may turn into strong negative ones when the brand acts in damaging ways for consumers' (Grégoire et al., 2009).

Moreover, participants were also asked if they ever owned Apple products. In this case, results were 52,5% "yes, in the past", 13,1% "yes, currently" and 34,3% "no" (attachment 19). This question is relevant because this study intended to verify if members of the considered anti-brand communities had all previously been Apple consumers. From these results, it is possible to understand that the majority of respondents had their products at some point, but a significant percentage never owned any Apple products. This result is congruent with the results obtained in the question intending to measure Negative Previous Purchase Experience, which from the total sample (n=99) had 68 responses. Also, it is believed that a considerable number of members of the anti-brand communities have negative relationships with the brand without ever being consumers. Further, this result is consistent with findings from the content analysis, that provided an understanding that consumer's ideological incompatibility with brands is one of the major reasons for participating in anti-brand communities and for developing feelings of hate. Likewise, ideological incompatibility between the consumer and a specific brand may be a predictor of a negative relationship without the need to own a product or experience a service.

3.4.4. Study of the Hypothesis of the Investigation

In order to answer the hypothesis of this investigation, it was conducted a regression analysis using PROCESS macro (version 3.1) for SPSS by Andrew F. Hayes. This macro has proven to be effective for verifying mediation and moderation analysis (Field, 2013).

Furthermore, this investigation ran separate analysis for each moderator (Ideological Incompatibility; Negative Previous Purchase Experience; Interaction Preference; Participation in Virtual Community) because variables are not necessarily related and may not occur all at the same time.

Conclusions from qualitative analysis found that Brand Anthropomorphism positively impacts on Brand Hate in the present of a mediator and under the influence of four moderators. Further, this research conducted a simple mediation analysis (model number 4; confidence intervals=95; 5.000 bootstrap samples) with Brand Anthropomorphism as independent variable, Blame Attribution as mediator variable and Brand Hate as dependent variable (table 4).

Table 4. Coefficients of the mediation (Blame Attributions) with model number 4.

	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
Mediation: Blame					
Outcome Variable: Blame Attributions (R-sq=,0182; p=,8581)					
Constant	4,2477	,2667	,0000***	3,7183	4,7770
Brand Anthropomorphism	,0145	,0806	,8581	-,1455	,1745
Outcome Variable: Brand Hate (R-sq=,1052; p<,01***)					
Constant	2,7181	,4948	,0000***	1,7360	3,7003
Brand Anthropomorphism	,0405	,0787	,6077	-,1156	,1967
Blame Attribution	,3279	,0991	,0013***	,1312	,5245

Moderation. N=99. SE= standard error; p= p-value; LLCI= lower limit of the 95% confidence interval; UCLI = upper limit of the 95% confidence interval. *** p<,01.

Resuming, it is desired to understand if Brand Anthropomorphism will influence Brand Hate via Blame Attribution, which was found not to be significant and thus, not validating H1a (β =,0047; zero was found between the confidence interval of the bootstrap analysis) (table 5).

Table 5. Indirect Effect of X (Brand Anthropomorphism) on Y (Brand Hate).

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Blame Attribution (mediator)	,0047	,0255	-,0548	,0511

Furthermore, the direct effect of Brand Anthropomorphism in Brand hate, ignoring the mediator, is also not significant ($\beta=.0405$; $p=.6077$; zero was found between the confidence interval of the bootstrap analysis), not validating H1.

Nevertheless, it was found that the mediator (Blame Attributions) has a positive impact on the dependent variable, Brand Hate ($\beta=.3279$; $p<.01$), validating H3. In other words, Blame Attributions help explain Brand Hate. Further, the independent variable (Brand Anthropomorphism), does not have direct impact on the mediator ($\beta=.0145$; $p>.05$), which could be the reason why the mediated relationship did not have significant values. These results do not validate H2.

Next, it was conducted a moderated mediation analysis (model number 8; confidence intervals=95; 5.000 bootstrap samples) with Ideological Incompatibility as the moderator of the effect of Brand Anthropomorphism on Brand Hate through Blame Attribution. General result of this moderated mediation with the outcome variable Brand Hate was significant ($R\text{-sq}=.2632$; $p<.05$) and more specifically, Ideological Incompatibility has significant impact on Brand Hate ($\beta=1.3642$; $p<.01$). Considering the previous results, it is possible to validate H1b. On the contrary, general effects of Ideological Incompatibility in the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and the mediator (Blame Attribution) were not significant ($R\text{-sq}=.0404$; $p=.2687$). Furthermore, considering the effect of Ideological Incompatibility on Blame Attribution did not show significant impact ($\beta=-.2340$; $p=.5961$), thus not validating H2a.

Next, it was also conducted a moderated mediation analysis with Brand Anthropomorphism as the independent variable, Blame Attributions as the mediator and Brand Hate as the dependent variable and Negative Previous Purchase Experience as the moderator (model number 8; confidence intervals=95; 5.000 bootstrap samples). These variables account for the two major reasons discovered in qualitative analysis leading to Brand Hate in the anti-brand communities but do not necessarily need to occur at the same time, which means they could independently impact on this moderated mediation. Furthermore, the moderation effect of Negative Previous Purchase Experience was not significant either for the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Blame Attribution ($\beta=.5289$; $p=.2337$), not validating (H2b), neither for the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate ($\beta=.0969$; $p=.7932$), not validating H1c.

Table 6 resumes previous findings.

Table 6. Coefficients for the mediation (Blame Attributions) and moderation (Ideological Incompatibility; Negative Previous Purchase Experience) with model number 8.

	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
Moderation 1: Ideological Incompatibility					
Outcome Variable: Blame Attributions (R-sq=,0404; p=,2687)					
Constant	5,2929	1,9637	,0083***	1,3944	9,1914
Brand Anthropomorphism	-,6141	,5873	,2984	-1,7799	,5518
Ideological Incompatibility	-,2340	,4400	,5961	-1,1074	,6395
Interaction (BA x II)	,1422	,1314	,2821	-,1188	,4031
Outcome Variable: Brand Hate (R-sq=,2632; p<,05)					
Constant	-3,0265	1,8591	,1069	-6,7177	,6647
Brand Anthropomorphism	1,2016	,5389	,0282**	,1316	2,2717
Blame Attributions	,2538	,0936	,0080***	,0679	,4397
Ideological Incompatibility	1,3642	,4021	,0010***	,5659	2,1625
Interaction (BA x II)	-,2664	,1207	,0297**	-,5060	-,0268
Moderation 2: Negative Previous Purchase Experience					
Outcome Variable: Blame Attributions (R-sq=,0615; p=,2516)					
Constant	1,9546	1,8147	,2855	-1,6707	5,5800
Brand Anthropomorphism	,3471	,5297	,5146	-,7111	1,4053
Neg. Previous Purchase Experience	,5289	,4399	,2337	-,3500	1,4078
Interaction (BA x NPPE)	-,0734	,1294	,5724	-,3319	,1851
Outcome Variable: Brand Hate (R-sq=,1938; p<,05)					
Constant	2,5346	1,5155	,0994	-,4940	5,5632
Brand Anthropomorphism	-,2106	,4399	,6337	-1,0897	,6684
Blame Attributions	,2572	,1035	,0156**	,0505	,4640
Neg. Previous Purchase Experience	,0969	,3682	,7932	-,6389	,8328
Interaction (Blame x NPPE)	,0622	,1074	,5646	-,1524	,2767

Moderation 1. N=99. SE= standard error; p= p-value; LLCI= lower limit of the 95% confidence interval; UCLI = upper limit of the 95% confidence interval. BA=Brand Anthropomorphism; II=Ideological Incompatibility. * p<,1; ** p<,05; *** p<,01.

Moderation 2. N=68. SE=standard error; p=p-value; LLCI=lower limit of the 95% confidence interval; UCLI=upper limit of the 95% confidence interval. BA=Brand Anthropomorphism; NPPE=Negative Previous Purchase Experience. *p<,1. **p<,05. ***p<,01.

Finally, to test H3a, H3b, H3c and H3d it was used Brand Anthropomorphism as independent variable, Blame Attribution as the mediator, Interaction Preference and Identification with Virtual Community as moderators and finally, Brand Hate as dependent variable (table 7). For this moderated mediation it was used model 15 (confidence intervals=95; 5.000 bootstrap samples), each moderator was analyzed independently.

First, it will be analyzed the moderation with the variable Interaction Preference. Further, considering Brand Hate as the outcome, general results show significance for the model application ($R\text{-sq}=,1644$; $p<,05$). Nevertheless, coefficients for direct effects do not reveal significant impact of the variable Interaction Preference on the dependent variable, Brand Hate ($\beta=,2708$; $p=,4745$). Overall, it is possible to verify that Interaction Preference does not moderate the whole relationship, not validating H3a. Next, the effect of Interaction Preference on the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and the mediator Blame Attribution, was also not significant ($R\text{-sq}=,0003$; $p=,8581$), not validating H3c. Still, with this model it was possible to verify that the interaction between Brand Anthropomorphism and Interaction Preference is significant ($\beta=,1394$; $p<,05$). Moreover, when considering the conditional effects of the focal predictor (Brand Anthropomorphism) at values of this moderator, it is only when Interaction Preference is high that it is possible to have a significant effect of the predictor on the variable ($\beta=,2353$; zero was not found between the confidence interval of the bootstrap analysis). See table 8 for coefficients on this conditional effect.

Finally, it will be analyzed the moderation with the variable Identification with Virtual Community. Further, general results for the application of this model with the outcome Blame Attribution was not significant ($R\text{-sq}=,0003$; $p=,8581$) but with the outcome variable Brand Hate, it was significant ($R\text{-sq}=,1257$; $p<,05^{**}$). Further, we will be focusing on the coefficients for the outcome Brand Hate. Then, only the mediator Blame Attribution had significance ($\beta=,6739$; $p<,05$). Concretely, direct impact of Participation in Virtual Community in the dependent Variable, Brand Hate was not significant ($\beta=,3785$; $p=,3962$), the interaction between the independent variable Brand Anthropomorphism on the moderator (Participation in Virtual Community) was also not significant ($\beta=,0452$; $p>,05$) and finally, the interaction between the mediator (Blame Attribution) and the moderator Participation in Virtual Community was not significant ($\beta=-,1066$; $p>,1$). To conclude, the index of moderated mediation was also not significant (see table 10).

Table 7. Coefficients for the mediation (Blame Attributions) and moderation (Interaction Preference; Identification with virtual community) with model number 15.

	Coeff	SE	P	LLCI	ULCI
Moderation 1: Interaction Preference					
Outcome variable: Blame Attribution (R-sq=,0003; p=,8581)					
Constant	4,2477	,2667	,0000***	3,7183	4,7770
Brand Anthropomorphism	,0145	,0806	,8581	-,1455	,1745
Outcome Variable: Brand Hate (R-sq=,2221; p<,01)					
Constant	2,3673	1,2659	,0646*	-,1466	4,8812
Brand Anthropomorphism	-,4270	,1899	,0269**	-,8042	-,0499
Blame Attributions	,6102	,2629	,0225**	,0881	1,1323
Interaction Preference	,2708	,3771	,4745	-,4781	1,0197
Interaction (BA x IP)	,1394	,0531	,0101**	,0340	,2449
Interaction (Blame x IP)	-,1245	,0791	,1192	-,2816	,0327
Moderation 2: Participation in Virtual Community					
Outcome Variable: Blame Attribution (R-sq=,0003; p=,8581)					
Constant	4,2477	,2667	,0000***	3,7183	4,7770
Brand Anthropomorphism	,0145	,0806	,8581	-,1455	,1745
Outcome Variable: Brand Hate (R-sq=,1257; p<,05**)					
Constant	1,5747	1,5869	,3236	-1,5766	4,7260
Brand Anthropomorphism	-,1352	,3812	,7236	-,8922	,6217
Blame Attributions	,6739	,3212	,0386**	,0360	1,3117
Participation in Virtual Community	,3785	,4440	,3962	-,5033	1,2602
Interaction (AB x PVC)	,0452	,0990	,6490	-,1513	,2417
Interaction (BA x PVC)	-,1066	,0877	,2270	-,2807	,0675

Moderation 1. N=99. SE= standard error; p= p-value; LLCI= lower limit of the 95% confidence interval; UCLI = upper limit of the 95% confidence interval. BA=Brand Anthropomorphism; IP=Interaction Preference. * p<,1; ** p<,05; *** p<,01.

Moderation 2. N=99. SE=standard error; p=p-value; LLCI=lower limit of the 95% confidence interval; UCLI=upper limit of the 95% confidence interval. BA=Brand Anthropomorphism; PVC=Participation in Virtual Community. *p<,1. **p<,05. ***p<,01.

Table 8. Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator (Interaction Preference).

Interaction Preference	Effect	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
1,7500	-,1830	,1111	,1029	-,4037	,0376
4,0000	,1307	,0850	,1274	-,0380	,2995
4,7500	,2353	,1089	,0333	,0191	,4515

3.4.5. Results

Regression analysis results do not display statistical direct effect of Brand Anthropomorphism on Brand Hate and also do not show significant indirect effects with mediation from Blame Attribution. Consequently, these results are not consistent with findings from study 1. Moreover, in all performed tests, the mediator Blame Attribution always revealed significant impact on the dependent variable, Brand Hate, even when the moderators were changed.

Furthermore, regarding moderation variables, respectively Ideological Incompatibility and Negative Previous Purchase Experience, it was possible to verify that the measure Ideological Incompatibility is a good predictor of Brand Hate, which is congruent with findings from study 1 that present Ideological Incompatibility as one of the major reasons leading to negative consumer-brand relationships. This result is consistent with findings from netnographic analysis, since the absence of corporate social responsibility resulted in incongruences between the brand and the consumer. Further, contrarily to pre-assumptions and results of study 1, Negative Previous Purchase Experience as a moderator did not show significant impact neither for Brand Hate nor Blame Attribution.

Moreover, the moderation with the variables Interaction Preference and Participation in Virtual Community also did not reveal significant impact, neither for the mediator (Blame Attribution) nor the dependent variable (Brand Hate). Consequently, these findings do not correspond to qualitative analysis. Nevertheless, it was found that Brand Anthropomorphism has positive impact in this moderator.

Finally, attachment 20 resumes general results for this study's hypothesis. Subsequently, it will be discuss the findings and the contributes of this investigation and derive implications for future research.

4. Discussion

In this section it will be discussed the results from the two performed studies (qualitative and quantitative analysis) and the extent to which they contribute to answer the research questions and the specified hypothesis.

Furthermore, regarding the qualitative analysis (netnography) based on data collected in six anti-brand communities – two product brands and two services brands – during a period of two years, it is possible to illustrate the complexity of negative consumer-brand relationships. Also, as authors explained, this method is adequate for understanding consumers' motivations and general characteristics of a sample population (Kozinets, 2015).

This investigation was motivated by a call for further research in MacInnis and Folkes (2017) paper, in which they explain the need to consider and investigate the types of negative relationships that prevail and what causes relationships to change from positive to negative. Also, Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2016) address the importance of human brands for marketing research while explaining major changes from traditional marketing to digital. Consequently, based on the literature review and identified gap, two research questions were defined. This study will next approach the general findings for each research question.

RQ 1: In the context of social media based anti-brand communities, does consumers' tendencies for Brand Anthropomorphism increase the potential for Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships?

First, findings from the present investigation confirm that anthropomorphism in marketing goes beyond product design (Puzakova, Hyokjin, et al., 2013), advertising (Laksmidewi, Susianto, & Afiff, 2017; Puzakova, Rocereto, et al., 2013; Reavey et al., 2018), personification (Delbaere, McQuarrie, & Phillips, 2011) or even avatars and mascots (Brown, 2010). It is acknowledged that all these components are part of the construct but there are more abstract variables, studied in the field of psychology (Epley et al., 2008), that can be transferred to consumer and marketing research.

Qualitative analysis provided evidence that members of the studied anti-brand communities perceive the targeted brands as capable of intentional and responsible actions. Further, more than just searching for evidence that validates the use of anthropomorphism as a marketing strategy, this investigation provides examples which demonstrate that consumers perceive brands in anthropomorphic ways.

Therefore, results for brands' intentionality and responsibility were quantified through the scale of Blame Attribution employed in the online survey. Thus, this study investigated the mediating impact of Blame Attributions in the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate. In other words, it was pre-assumed that individuals' tendencies towards Brand Anthropomorphism, mediated by the perception of responsibility, intentionality and blame towards the brand, would lead to Brand Hate. Even though this hypothesis (H1a) was not validated because the direct impact of Anthropomorphism on Blame Attributions was not significant, qualitative analysis provided that insight. Moreover, future investigations could apply this research model to other social media based anti-brand communities which are targeting different brands. Even though a change of brand isn't expected to influence the output, a different population may be more receptive and participative, allowing the collection of a more significative volume of answers.

Moreover, the characteristics of social media, specially its high interactivity and reach, allow consumers to gain power when fighting incompatibilities with brands. Further, anti-brand activists can freely and publicly represent themselves while sharing with other users the reasons and experiences that lead them to build negative relationships with brands (Kucuk, 2014). Therefore, consumer activists need to be acknowledged by brand managers as they may be a threat to companies (Kucuk, 2015). Next, this investigation will address research question number 2.

RQ 2: Which are the types of Negative Consumer-Brand Relationships that prevail in social media based anti-brand communities and what causes relationships to change from positive to negative?

Results from both studies provided satisfactory results for demonstrating prevailing negative consumer Brand Relationships. Further, netnographic analysis revealed Brand Hate to be the most common negative relationship in the studied anti-brand communities. Even though evidence of anti-consumption was also found mostly for two brands (Nestlé and McDonalds) only the relationships found across all anti-brand communities were considered for further quantitative analysis. Regarding this research question, it is also important to note that study 2 revealed the attribution of blame from consumers towards brands to have a significant impact in all of the mediated moderation analysis, which also validates findings from content analysis.

Furthermore, the second part of this research question, referring to the causes that may change positive consumer-brand relationships into negative ones, was also analysed in both studies. First, netnographic analysis provided many examples that prove ideological incompatibility to be one of the

major reasons leading consumers to hate brands and join anti-brand communities. Also, ideological incompatibility was explored by previous authors regarding brand avoidance and reflects a wider consideration of society (Lee, Conroy, et al., 2009; Lee, Motion, et al., 2009; Rindell et al., 2014). Therefore, it was hypothesized that the absence of corporate social responsibility for anthropomorphic brands would increase chances for Brand Hate. Also, members of the anti-brand communities report their concerns about corporate hegemony and monopoly, which is congruent with previous authors' explanations for incongruencies between consumers and brands (Grégoire et al., 2009). This moderator was shown by quantitative analysis as having a significant effect on Brand Hate, thus validating H1b. Nevertheless, Ideological Incompatibility did not have impact regarding moderation of the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Blame Attribution, contrarily to qualitative analysis results.

Further, the second major reason is negative previous purchase experience, since many consumers regret buying products or using services from those specific brands. In addition, content analysis (Study 1) found this regret to usually be associated with product/service failure and with low quality. Even though in the first study, negative previous purchase experiences were commonly found in publications of the anti-brand communities during the two-year period of the analysis, this impact was not validated by the moderated mediation analysis performed in study 2. So, Negative Previous Purchase Experience did not show significance neither on Brand Hate neither on Blame Attribution, thus not validating hypothesis H1c and H2b. Moreover, this result from quantitative analysis is also incongruent with previous authors findings which defined that humanizing objects does not necessarily lead to purchase intentions or the commercial transaction itself (Aggarwal & McGill, 2012) but is capable of influencing attitudes and evaluations that may lead to consumption (P. Hart & Royne, 2017). Further, this result may be due to specificities of the sample or to the limited number of participants, for example. Future research could evaluate this moderator impact on other anti-brand communities to verify if significance results still stand.

Next, based on literature concerning online communities (Woisetschläger et al., 2008), it was considered that Interaction Preference and Participation in Virtual Communities would also moderate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate through Blame Attribution. First, Interaction preference was defined as the tendency for consumers to seek for interaction with strangers (Wiertz & de ruyter, 2007). Further, qualitative analysis reflected that most of the individuals who join anti-brand communities should fit in this category because it is visible that members wish to

make their own point and share contents that concern them. Nevertheless, members of the *I Hate Apple* group interact more than members of the anti-brand pages. When transporting this construct to quantitative analysis, it was not possible to verify a significant impact on Brand Hate (H3a and H3c not validated) but it was possible to verify a significant interaction between Brand Anthropomorphism and Interaction Preference. Thus, previous authors explained that human have a natural desire for social connection that sometimes is not entirely fulfilled (Aggarwal & McGill, 2007, 2012; Epley et al., 2008). Actually, when humans fail to establish connections with other humans, they sometimes compensate by anthropomorphizing non-human agents (Feng, 2016). Also, this phenomena when coupled with the human need for belonging, frequently occurs on anti-brand communities (Puzakova et al., 2009). Consequently, this investigation validates previous findings from literature review.

Finally, this investigation considered the moderation of Participation in Virtual Community in the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate and also in the moderation mediated relationship through Blame Attribution. Further, this sequence was validated in qualitative analysis because it was visible in the comments of publications in anti-brand communities that members who see themselves as representative members and who feel belonging and identification with other members, tendentiously interact more and also reveal more negative feelings towards the targeted brand. Some of the members even commented on the same publications more than once when they identified with the theme being approached or with the experience narrated by another member. Nevertheless, this aspect was not confirmed through quantitative analysis, since none of the values for the effects were significant. Again, such results may be related to limitations from the sample used and not the construct itself, not validating the hypothesis H3b and H3d.

5. Conclusion

Negative consumer-brand relationships have been a relevant theme for marketing research. Though anti-brand communities have been studied for several authors during the last years, literature accessing this negative relationship in social media is still at its early stage. Moreover, as explained during this investigation, Facebook provides a good environment for complaining and transposing consumers' hate towards global brands. Also, research on Brand Anthropomorphism is still insufficient (U. Tuškej & Podnar, 2017).

Furthermore, this study provides other academics, targeted brands, their competitors and brand managers with helpful insights about the relationship between brand anthropomorphism and negative consumer-brand relationships, in the context of social media based anti-brand communities.

For this purpose, this investigation conducted two studies for accessing the connection between the two constructs. First study was a netnographic analysis of six anti-brand communities based on Facebook, namely *I Hate Apple*, *Apple Sucks*, *Anti Apple (Brand)*, *Boycott Nestlé*, *I hate McDonalds* and *Uber Sucks*. The content analysis considered a two-year period between May 2018 and May 2016, which resulted in a total of 3486 publications. Findings from qualitative analysis validated that Brand Anthropomorphism is a predictor for negative consumer-brand relationships. Further, the content analysis of six anti-brand communities based on Facebook found that Brand Hate is the more common negative relationship. Additionally, this research considered the potential differences between product brands and service brands when selecting the anti-brand communities for analysis, which had never been done by previous authors.

The second study was an online survey applied in the anti-brand communities that consented it. Consequently, the sample of this study was composed by 99 respondents of *I Hate Apple*, *Apple Sucks* and *Anti Apple (Brand)* communities. Thus, the moderated mediation analysis performed with the macro Process 3.1 by Andrew F. Hayes was helpful for establishing the effects of the studied variables either regarding the outcome as Blame Attribution (mediator) or Brand Hate (dependent variable). This study was relevant for validating that consumers' attribution of blame to brands actions has a positive effect on Brand Hate and also for validating that Ideological Incompatibility is a good moderator for Brand Hate.

Further, even though results from this investigation's studies (qualitative and quantitative approach) did not always correspond, they have provided evidence and justification for each selected variable and its relevance considering the research questions.

Second, this study highlights the power of social media as a tool for establishing negative consumer-brand relationships. The uprising of the internet allowed consumers to easily communicate with each other and to complain publicly and worldwide negative experiences with brands (Kucuk, 2014). In this case, social media based anti-brand communities reveal high potential for interaction among users and easy accessibility to information (Melancon & Dalakas, 2018). Still considering the anti-brand communities, conducted interviews during netnographic analysis provided valuable insights about their founder's motives for starting said communities. This method proved to be highly efficient for complementing the content analysis and allowed a flowing discourse during the description of the studied anti-brand communities. Also, even though in person interviews and focus group could also be helpful for furthering understanding about these motives, it was verified during this investigation that it is not easy to approach anti-brand communities and it is even more difficult to get feedback and responses for online surveys.

Considering previous statements, it is important to acknowledge that a bigger and more significative sample number would be better for the general analysis. Still, the investigator kept a transparent attitude during the period of analysis, not intervening in the dialogues to guarantee that data would not be biased. Also, this investigation contacted all anti-brand communities in order to ask permission to conduct interviews with the administrators and further, to share the online survey with the community. The author was also clear about the purpose of this investigation when presenting it to administrators and members who comment on the publication about the survey.

Moreover, this investigation should consider that Netnographies' conclusions depend on the investigator's characteristics and style and are limited by the fast evolution of online communities. For example, companies are increasingly aware of Trademark laws as a mean for fighting anti-branders. Several anti-brand communities and anti-brand pages use images, logos and videos of brands inappropriately, to transmit their messages. Some authors believe that companies are still trying to understand the benefits and the prejudice that may bring upon brand equity by acting against such pages and groups. This situation shows why some pages have been closed over the years, making anti-branders jobs difficult (Kucuk, 2014). At the same time, even though negative speech from anti-brand consumers is creative and resourceful, technological advances are facilitating the identification of

those same messages, especially because, often, they use similar semiotic codes of those used by the companies, allowing them to report the content (Kucuk, 2016). Consequently, as Melancon and Dalakas (2018) study enlightened, consumers are starting to expose their negative feedback on brands' official pages, which could also be announcing changes in consumers' behaviour and tendencies for creating anti-brand communities.

Furthermore, even though the selected anti-brand communities positively corresponded with all the established requisites, they didn't show the expected behavior. The fact that three of the approached groups didn't give any feedback in order to advance with the interviews and the online survey, limited the reach of this investigation. Consequently, future studies may find communities that are more receptive to the investigators' presence and allow higher numbers of member's responses and consequently higher study reliability.

Additionally, as previous literature exposed, cultural differences may also be significative regarding individual's tendencies to anthropomorphize brands and play an important role regarding interaction preferences and consumer participation. So, future research could also aim to understand the impact of cultural perceptions on social media based anti-brand communities.

Scholars may also consider other type of products and services, since different brands are more capable of establishing stronger relationships with consumer than others. For example, hedonic brands may be more susceptible to brand hate than utilitarian products and services. Finally, this study focused on global brands but future studies could consider, for instance, smaller companies, to further the discussion started by this investigation.

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7. Attachments

Attachment 1. The evolution of negative consumer-brand relationships considered in this study.

Passive Resistance	Active Resistance
Consumer passive response to negative brand behaviour. Usually by leaving the market.	Consumer active response to negative brand behaviour. Usually implies fight-back.
Consumer Boycotts (Sen et al., 2001) Cultural Resistance (Holt, 2002) Brand Avoidance (Banister & Hogg, 2004) Brand Transgressions (Aaker, 2004) Brand Dislike (Dalli et al., 2006) Brand Avoidance (Lee et al., 2009) Brand Rejection (Cromie & Ewing, 2009) Customer Revenge and Avoidance (Grégoire et al., 2009) Brand Misconduct (Huber et al., 2010) Brand Aversion (Alba & Lutz, 2013) Attachment–Aversion model (Park et al., 2013) Brand Avoidance (Rindell et al., 2014) Brand Misconduct (Hsiao et al., 2015) Negative WOM (Balaji et al., 2016) Extreme negative affect (Bryson et al., 2013)	Brand Activism (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004) Consumer Activism on the Internet (Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006) Anti-consumption (Lee et al., 2009) Symbolic (anti-)consumption (Hogg et al., 2009) Boycotting (Yuksel & Mryteza, 2009) Negative Double Jeopardy (Kucuk, 2010) Digital Anti-branding (Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009) Anti-consumption and consumer resistance (Cherrier, 2009) Anti-consumption (Iyer & Muncy, 2009) Brand Hate (Zarantonello et al., 2009) Anti-brand Communities (Hollenbeck & Zinkham, 2010) Anti-branding (Johnson, 2011) Anti-Consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012) Anti-brand activism (Romani et al., 2015) Anti-Consumption and Consumer Well-Being (Hoffmann & Lee, 2016) Anti-Brand Communities (Dessart et al., 2016) Social Media Based Anti-Brand Communities (Popp et al., 2016)

Source: Own elaboration. Adapted from Hollenbeck & Zinkhan (2010), Kucuk (2014) and completed with more recent literature.

Attachment 2. Overview of literature considering anti-consumption.

Concepts	Authors	Conclusions
Ethical and Environmental consumption Consumer Resistance	Chatzidakis & Lee (2012)	Anti-consumption as a distinct area of reasons against consumption.
Consumer Resistance Voluntary Simplicity Culture Jamming	Cherrier (2009)	Defines two types of resistant consumer identities: The hero identity and the project identity.
Consumer well-being	Hofmann & Lee (2016)	How anti-consumption leads to consumer well-being. The increasing use of social media provides means for consumers to fight brand hegemony.
Symbolic consumption Avoidance, Aversion and abandonment	Hogg et al. (2009)	Anti-consumption as the interaction between avoidance, aversion and abandonment.
Self-actualization Self-consciousness Global impact consumers Simplifiers	Iyer & Muncy (2009)	Defines four types of anti-consumption consumers. Proposes a scale to distinguish between consumers who engage in anti-consumption for societal concerns and consumers who do so for more personal reasons.
Consumer well-being Materialism	Lee & Ahn (2016)	Relationship between materialism, anti-consumption, and consumer well-being (CWB). Proposes that materialism has a negative relationship with CWB and anti-consumption has a positive relationship with CWB.
Brand Avoidance Consumer Resistance Negative symbolic consumption	Lee et al. (2009)	Presents avoidance as a type of anti-consumption and exposes three types of brand avoidance: experiential, identity and moral brand avoidance.

Source: Own elaboration.

Attachment 3. Overview and evolution of “anti-branding” research in marketing field.

Author(s)	Concept	Definition
Bailey (2004)	Complaint Websites	The internet provided the appropriate environment for the creation of corporate complaint websites, in which consumers may diffuse negative messages and dissatisfactions towards companies.
Wolrich (2005)	Corporate Hate Websites	Anti-branding websites aim to affect consumption of specific brands through the construction of a negative identity.
Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2006)	Anti-brand communities	Anti-brand communities are social relationships without geographical boundaries where consumers usually target specific brands or corporations.
Kucuk (2008)	Anti-branding websites (Negative Double Jeopardy)	Anti-brand websites appeared with the advent of the internet and represent the new form of protest for activists. Also, they are a consequent of consumer power. Additionally, the concept of “Double Jeopardy” is actualized to ‘Negative Double Jeopardy’, which means that large brands suffer from more attention than smaller brands, which can be both positive and negative.
Krishnamurthy and Kucuk (2009)	Anti-branding on the internet (websites)	Internet has contributed to consumer power, consequence of easier access to information, capability for publishing comments at any time and increased participation. Further, the content of anti-brand websites can be classified into three types, respectively market, ideological and transactional speech.
Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2010)	Consumer Activism on the Internet	Injustice, dishonest and unfairness are key motivations for consumers to engage in anti-brand activism. And so, members of such communities reject brands meanings and practices.
Johnson et al. (2011)	Anti-brand actions	Positive consumer-brand relationships may transform themselves into strong negative consumer-brand relationships, such as anti-branding.
Romani et al. (2015)	Consumer anti-brand activism	Consumer’s feelings of hate towards brands, provoked by corporate wrongdoings and intensified by the empathy of other consumers leads to anti-brand actions. Additionally, the stronger the transgression and the stronger the repercussions for individuals, the stronger the power of the message when diffuse in these groups.
Dessart et al. (2016)	Drivers of Anti-Brand Community Behaviours	Studies group participation behaviour in the context of anti-brand community. <u>Individual level factors</u> : oppositional attitudinal loyalty;

		<u>Brand-related factors:</u> collective memory and brand material value; <u>Social factors:</u> community identification, community engagement and social approval.
Kucuk (2016)	Legality of Consumer Anti-Branding Activities in the Digital Age	Many brand haters use logos and symbols that are trademarks, which is prohibited in many countries. Such inadequate is conceptualized as “brand dilution”, since it dilutes the value and image of the brand.
(Popp et al., 2016)	Social media based anti-brand communities	Social media and its functionalities increase consumer’s participation and interaction. These means promot anti-brand communities, the spreading of negative messages and their reach.

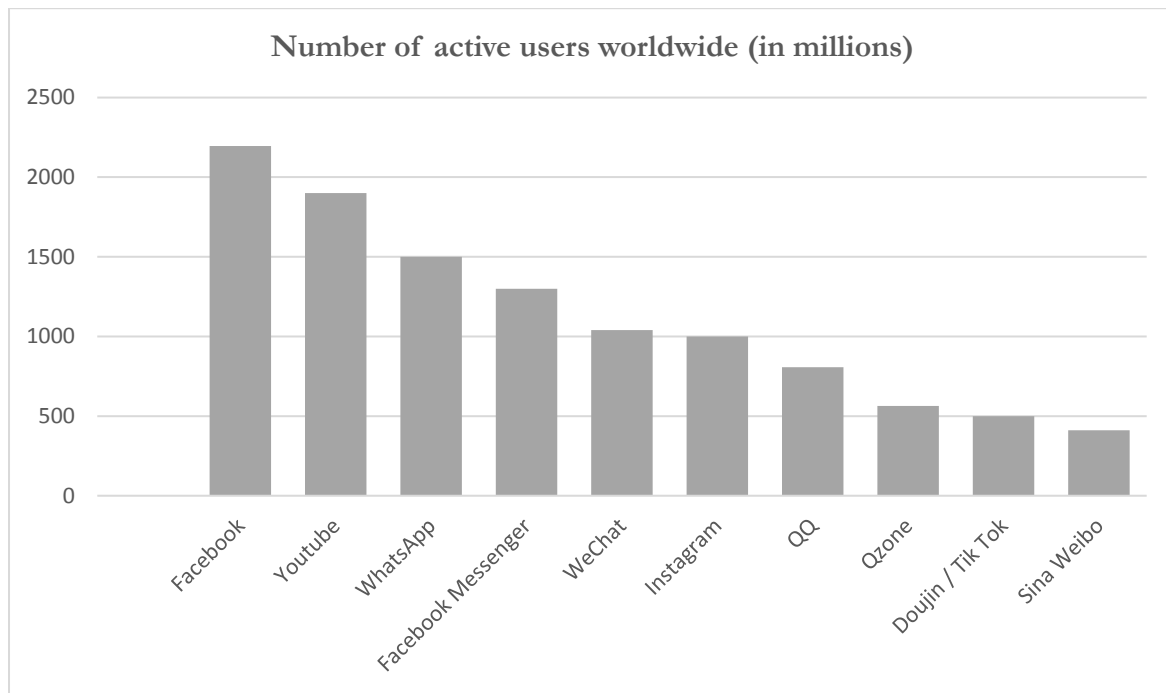
Source: Own elaboration.

Attachment 4. Anthropomorphism literature review divided by Perspectives.

Perspective	Literature Review
Human-Focused Perspective <i>Brands as having human-like</i> Features/Physiognomy/Mind/ Personalities/Traits	Anthropomorphic presentations (Hart & Royne, 2017) Anthropomorphism and product complexity (Hart et al., 2013) Product attributes (Wan et al., 2017)
Self-Focused Perspective <i>Brands as like me/ Connected to me</i> Brand Self Congruity/ Brand Self Connections	Schema congruity and Self congruence (Aggarwall & McGill, 2007) Automatic behavioural priming (Aggarwall & McGill, 2017) Social connection and loneliness (Bartz et al., 2016) Social exclusion (Chen et al., 2017) Drivers for Anthropomorphism (Epley et al., 2008) Social cognition (Epley et al., 2007) Self-Control (Hur et al., 2015) Brand self-congruity and brand self-connection (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017) Brand self-congruity (Puzakova et al., 2009) Individual differences in Anthropomorphism (Waytz et al., 2010)
Relationship-Focused Perspective <i>Brands as Relationship Partners</i> Brand Relationship Types Brand Relationship Norms	Anthropomorphism influence on product wrongdoings (Puzakova et al., 2013) Marketing relationships and consumption (Lanier et al., 2013) Anthropomorphism and brand love (Rauschnabel & Ahuvia, 2014) Brand personality and brand loyalty (Guido & Peluso, 2015) Brand as servant and brand as partner (Kim & Kramer, 2015) Price fairness and consumer brand relationship norms (Kwak et al., 2015) Brand attachment, brand aversion and brand betrayal (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017) Anthropomorphism and Social Crowding (Puzakova & Kwak, 2017) Anthropomorphism and the role of self-brand integration (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2017)

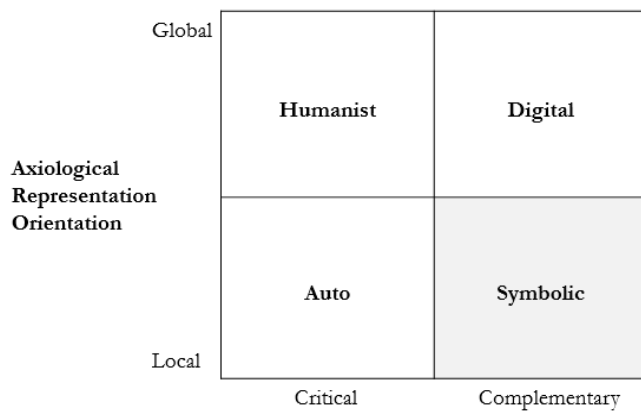
Source: Own elaboration.

Attachment 5. Top 10 most famous social network sites worldwide as of July 2018, ranked by number of active users (in millions).



Source: Statista, 2018. Accessed 1st of August 2018.

Attachment 6 – The four types of Netnographies.



Source: Adapted from Kozinets (2015).

Negative Consumer Brand Relationships and Brand Anthropomorphism: The Case of Social Media-Based Anti-Brand Communities

Dear Consumer,

This survey was elaborated by a Marketing Student from the University of Porto, in the scope of a masters' thesis.

The goal is to verify the relationship between anthropomorphized brands and social media-based anti-brand communities, more specifically on Facebook.

For a better understanding, brand anthropomorphism is commonly used as a marketing strategy for improving consumers considerations of brands. Nevertheless, the concept has recently been studied in light with it's negative potential. In other words, brand anthropomorphism triggers consumer's interpretations of brands as living entities, which may also be negative when the consumer perceives the brand as responsible for it's actions.

Furthermore, social media has proven to be a valuable tool for the diffusion of anti-brand communities, since it provides easy access to a large audience and the flexibility of non-geographical boundaries.

This survey is anonymous and it will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your contribution.

***Required**

Gender *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

Age *

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18 - 24
- ☐ 25 - 34
- ☐ 35 - 44
- ☐ 45 - 54
- ☐ Above 54

Country *

Your answer

Are you a member of which anti-brand community? *

- ☐ I Hate Apple (closed group)
- ☐ Apple Sucks
- ☐ Anti Apple (Brand)

Have you ever loved the Apple brand? *

- ☐ Yes, in the past
- ☐ Yes, currently
- ☐ No

How do you feel about Apple? *

	Strongly Disagree	.	.	.	Strongly agree
I hate Apple.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I extremely dislike Apple.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really detest Apple.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel hostile towards Apple.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Have you ever owned any Apple products? *

- ☐ Yes, in the past
- ☐ Yes, currently
- ☐ No

If your previous answer was "yes", please give us feedback about your purchase experience.

	Strongly Disagree	.	.	.	Strongly Agree
This is one of the best brands I could have bought.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am satisfied with my decision to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My choice to buy this brand was a wise one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could do it again, I'd buy a different brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel bad about my decision to buy this brand.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm not happy that I bought this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm sure it was the right thing to buy this brand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How do you feel about Apple's ethical behaviors? *

	Strongly Disagree	.	.	.	Strongly agree
In my opinion Apple acts irresponsibly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In my opinion Apple acts unethically	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple violates moral standards	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple does not match my values and beliefs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Respecting ethical principles has no priority over achieving superior economic performance for Apple	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please give your opinion about the Apple brand. *

	Strongly disagree	.	.	.	Strongly Agree
Apple has intentions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple has free will.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple experiences emotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple has consciousness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Apple has a mind of its own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please reflect on the following statements. *

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly Agree

I blame Apple
for the situation
that made me
join the
community.

☐☐☐☐☐

I account Apple
responsible for
the situation
that made me
join the
community.

☐☐☐☐☐

I blame myself
for the situation
that made me
join the
community.

☐☐☐☐☐

I account
myself
responsible for
the situation
that made me
join the
community.

☐☐☐☐☐

Please reflect on your anti-Apple community. *

	Strongly Disagree	.	.	.	Strongly Agree
I see myself as belonging to the Anti-Apple community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Anti-Apple community plays a part in my everyday life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I see myself as a typical and representative member of the Anti-Apple community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The Anti-Apple community confirms in many aspects my view of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can identify with the Anti-Apple community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like I belong in the Apple community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please give us feedback about the following. *

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly Agree

I am someone
who enjoys
interacting with
other
community
members.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

I am someone
who likes
actively
participating in
discussions
with other
community
members.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

In general, I am
someone who,
given the
chance, seeks
contact with
other
community
members.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

In general, I
thoroughly enjoy
exchanging
ideas with other
community
members.

☐
☐
☐
☐
☐

Attachment 8. Murphy & Davidsholder (1998) reliability scale for Cronbach's Alpha test.

Condition	Alpha considered acceptable
Unacceptable Reliability	<0,6
Low Reliability	0,7
Moderated to high Reliability	0,8-0,9
High Reliability	>0,9

Source: Adapted from Maroco & Garcia-Marques (2006)

Attachment 9. Factorial Analysis for Brand Hate scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 9a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Brand Hate scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation
I hate this brand.		,817	4,26	,828
I extremely dislike this brand.		,806	4,33	,915
I really detest this brand.		,788	4,16	1,057
I feel hostile to this brand*		,931		
	,870			
	,931			

*Item deleted from scale.

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 9b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test for Brand Hate Scale.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.			,764
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	254,684	
	gl	3	
	Sig.	,000	

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 9c. Total Variance Explained for Brand Hate scale.

Autovalores iniciais				Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2,668	88,918	88,918	2,668	88,918	88,918
2	,199	6,649	95,567			
3	,133	4,433	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 10. Exploratory Factorial Analysis for Negative Previous Purchasing Experience scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 10a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Negative Previous Purchasing Experience scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
This is one of the best brands I could have bought. R		,667	3,8824	1,48152	,677
I am satisfied with my decision to buy this brand. R		,659	3,8382	1,46925	,671
My choice to buy this brand was a wise one. R		,643			
If I could do it again, I'd buy a different brand.		,718	3,9265	1,46925	,783
I feel bad about my decision to buy this brand*		,737	4,3676	,97589	,819
I'm not happy that I bought this brand.		724			
I'm sure it was the right thing to buy this brand. R		,663	-	-	-
			4,1324	1,00602	,822
			3,5588	1,60580	,619
	,724				
	,737				

*Item deleted from final analysis. R= Reversed-scoring. Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis.

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 10b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test Negative Previous Purchasing Experience scale.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.		,652
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	257,409
	gl	15
	Sig.	,000

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 10c. Total Variance Explained for Negative Previous Purchasing Experience scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2,477	41,284	41,284	2,477	41,284	41,284
2	2,190	36,494	77,778	2,190	36,494	77,778
3	,582	9,700	87,477			
4	,384	6,393	93,870			
5	,321	5,354	99,224			
6	,047	,776	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 11. Factorial Analysis to Ideological Incompatibility scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 11a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Ideological Incompatibility scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
In my opinion Apple acts irresponsibly.		,788	4,26	1,026	,379
In my opinion Apple acts unethically.		,713	4,46	,787	,693
Apple violates moral standards.		,720			
Apple does not match my values and beliefs.		,715	4,43	,609	,758
Respecting ethical principles has no priority over achieving superior economic performance for Apple.		,786	4,57	,702	,698
			4,13	1,209	,457
	,783				

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 11b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test for Ideological Incompatibility scale.

Teste de KMO e Bartlett		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.		,796
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	190,847
	gl	10
	Sig.	,000

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 11c. Total Variance Explained for Ideological Incompatibility scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2,985	59,709	59,709	2,985	59,709	59,709
2	,733	14,655	74,364			
3	,625	12,494	86,858			
4	,422	8,446	95,303			
5	,235	4,697	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 12. Factorial Analysis to Brand Anthropomorphism scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 12a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Brand Anthropomorphism scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
Apple has intentions.		,698	3,91	1,318	,497
Apple has free will.		,692	3,35	1,612	,513
Apple experiences emotions.		,693			
Apple has consciousness.		,719	2,77	1,615	,492
Apple has a mind of its own.		,670	2,28	1,546	,389
			3,33	1,597	,573
	,740				

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 12b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of Brand Anthropomorphism scale.

Teste de KMO e Bartlett			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.			,758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	99,100	
	gl	10	
	Sig.	,000	

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 12c. Total Variance Explained of Brand Anthropomorphism scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2,465	49,298	49,298	2,465	49,298	49,298
2	,891	17,818	67,117			
3	,617	12,338	79,454			
4	,562	11,236	90,690			
5	,466	9,310	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 13. Factorial Analysis for Blame Attribution scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 13a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average, Standard Deviation and Communalities of Blame Attribution scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
I blame Apple for the situation that made me join the community.		4,31	,911	,833
I account Apple responsible for the situation that made me join the community.		4,27	,967	,833
I blame myself for the situation that made me join the community*		-	-	-
I account myself responsible for the situation that made me join the community*		-	-	-
0,799				

*Items deleted from final analysis.

Table 13b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of Blame Attribution scale.

Teste de KMO e Bartlett		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.		,500
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	56,736
	gl	1
	Sig.	,000

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 13c. Total Variance Explained of Blame Attribution scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1,667	83,337	83,337	1,667	83,337	83,337
2	,333	16,663	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 14. Factorial Analysis for Identification with Virtual Community scale (method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 14a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Identification with Virtual Community scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
I see myself as belonging to the Anti-Apple community.		,754	4,17	1,000	,760
The Anti-Apple community plays a part in my everyday life.		,817	3,11	1,531	,401
I see myself as a typical and representative member of the Anti-Apple community.		,760	3,91	1,060	,641
The Anti-Apple community confirms in many aspects my view of who I am.		,765	3,73	1,219	,625
I can identify with the Anti-Apple community.		,760			,829
I feel like I belong in the Apple community*		,829	4,08	,965	,740
					-
	,810				
	,829				

* Item deleted from final analysis. Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis. **Source:** Output from SPSS.

Table 14b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test of Identification with Virtual Community scale.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.		,802
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	219,828
	gl	10
	Sig.	,000

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 14c. Total Variance Explained of Identification with Virtual Community scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,168	63,358	63,358	3,168	63,358	63,358
2	,745	14,896	78,254			
3	,498	9,960	88,214			
4	,370	7,408	95,622			
5	,219	4,378	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 15. Factorial Analysis for Interaction Preference scale (Method of principal components based on auto value 1, with Varimax rotation).

Table 15a. Cronbach's Alpha, Average and Standard Deviation and Communalities for Interaction Preference scale.

Scale Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Average	Standard Deviation	Communalities (Extraction)
I am someone who enjoys interacting with other community members.		,931	3,65	1,312	,843
I am someone who likes actively participating in discussions with other community members.		,915	3,63	1,345	,900
In general, I am someone who, given the chance, seeks contact with other community members.		,937	3,38	1,434	,819
In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other community members.			3,55	1,380	,868
,944					

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 15b. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's test for Interaction Preference scale.

Teste de KMO e Bartlett		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling adequacy.		,759
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	46,659
	gl	6
	Sig.	,000

Source: Output from SPSS.

Table 15c. Total Variance Explained Interaction Preference scale.

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Autovalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3,430	85,738	85,738	3,430	85,738	85,738
2	,347	8,678	94,416			
3	,152	3,793	98,210			
4	,072	1,790	100,000			

Method of Extraction: Principal Components Analysis

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 16. Are you a member of which anti-brand community?

Anti-brand community	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Apple Sucks	36	36,4%
I Hate Apple (public group)	37	37,4%
Anti Apple (Brand)	11	11,1%
I Hate Apple (public group) and Apple Sucks	7	7,1%
All	8	8,1%

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 17. Demographics of online survey participants.

N=99	Frequency	Valid Percentage
Gender		
Female	12	12,1%
Male	87	87,9%
Age		
Under 18	6	6,1%
18 – 24	18	18,2%
25 – 34	37	37,4%
35 – 44	24	24,2%
45 – 54	10	10,1%
Above 54	4	4,0%
Country		
USA	34	34,3%
UK	20	20,2%
Australia	5	5,1%
Canada	5	5,1%
Other	35	35,3%
Education		
Less than a high school diploma	4	4,0%
High school degree or equivalent	23	23,2%
Higher education	72	72,7%

Source: Own elaboration. Based on output from SPSS.

Attachment 18. Have you ever loved the Apple brand?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Yes, in the past	32	32,3	32,3	32,3
	Yes, currently	1	1,0	1,0	33,3
	No	66	66,7	66,7	100,0
	Total	99	100,0	100,0	

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 19. Have you ever owned any Apple products?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes, in the past	52	52,5	52,5	52,5
	Yes, currently	13	13,1	13,1	65,7
	No	34	34,3	34,3	100,0
	Total	99	100,0	100,0	

Source: Output from SPSS.

Attachment 20. General results for the hypothesis.

Hypothesis	Results
H1. Brand Anthropomorphism positively impacts on Brand Hate.	Not Supported (H1)
H1a. Blame Attributions positively mediate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.	Not Supported (H1a)
H1b. Ideological Incompatibility positively moderate the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.	Supported (H1b)
H1c. Negative Previous Purchase Experience positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.	Not Supported (H1c)
H2. Brand Anthropomorphism positively impacts on the moderator Blame Attributions.	Not Supported (H2)
H2a. Ideological Incompatibility positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and the mediator Blame Attributions.	Not supported (H2a)
H2b. Negative Previous Purchase Experience positively moderates the relationship between brand anthropomorphism and Attributions of Blame.	Not supported (H2b)
H3. Blame Attributions positively impacts on Brand Hate.	Supported (H3)
H3a. Interaction Preference positively moderates the relationship between Blame Attributions and Brand Hate.	Not supported (H3a)
H3b. Identification with the Virtual Community positively moderates the relationship between Blame Attributions and Brand Hate.	Not supported (H3b)
H3c. Interaction Preference positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.	Not Supported (H3c)
H3d. Identification with the Virtual Community positively moderates the relationship between Brand Anthropomorphism and Brand Hate.	Not Supported (H3d)